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HIGH GIRL

OR

GENIUS IN OBLIVION

A NOVEL

BY DELBERT ESSEX DAVENPORT

ALSO IN THIS VOLUME

THE FIRST OF HIS FAMILY



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Essex
Davenport

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HIS FAMILY"

\$1 50 NET

HIGH GIRL
OR
GENIUS IN OBLIVION
AND
THE FIRST OF HIS FAMILY

Two Stories of the Minute
BY DELBERT ESSEX DAVENPORT.



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HIGH GIRL

THE CHAPTERS

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THE PUBLISHER'S PREFACE.

In presenting two of Delbert Essex Davenport's stories in one volume, the publishers feel they are giving the lovers of extraordinary fiction a rare treat, especially in view of the fact that Mr. Davenport writes his every novel upon an entirely original basis of so much charm and downright usefulness that an "extra measure" could not possibly be expected.

"High Girl" or "Genius in Oblivion," the featured novel in this book, is the first big effort to present the thrills, romance, mystery and uplifting education of trans-Atlantic aerial navigation. The plot ground-work the author has constructed so cleverly appeals remarkably to the imagination, so much so that little or no descriptive details are needed to maintain an almost perfect suspense to the very last sentence. And, after being royally entertained by the numerous intensely interesting incidents which accompany a daring American girl in her determination to fly across the mighty Atlantic, the reader can lay aside the book and truthfully say something worth-while remains to think about. Indeed, the great question is sure to arise—Is man's ambition given a fair trial?

"The First of His Family," a novelette from the same pen, is a worthy companion to "High Girl." In this second work the subject of personal ambition is treated from a completely different angle, and it is admirably done without resorting too much to so-called "fiction license."

Since both of these stories are founded upon mortal aspiration, it is appropriate to explain it by stating that Mr. Davenport is the editor of a national magazine called AMERICAN AMBITION, which is devoted fundamentally to exploiting the talents of unknown aspirants in all lines of endeavor and to giving real practical aid to all who need and deserve it. The situations in both of these stories

are based for the most part on the experiences of Editor Davenport with various unusual cases wherein men and women strive to attain high goals in life. In fact, the people from whom the author has drawn several of the characters in these narratives have visited him right in his editorial offices in the Land Title Building at Philadelphia, Pa., and gave him the inspirations to contribute these two important works to American literature.

We are confident Mr. Davenport is entitled to a sincere appreciation for the truly big, broad-minded enterprise he manifests in undertaking to call the attention of the human race so engagingly to a subject of such tremendous importance, for most certainly the very life of our nation depends upon how lasting and how potential individual aspiration can be made and such leadership in thought as this author-editor offers is a positive requisite.

THE MANTUP PUBLISHING COMPANY,
NEW YORK, U. S. A.

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CHAPTER I.

A MATE TO THE JINX.

HE HAD JUST one ambition and that was to see what kind of creatures inhabited Mars. He was anxious to ascertain whether or not they were any better than the people he had encountered on earth.

His one determination was to get revenge, collecting equally from all mortals!

And, who was he?

Given C. Hope, and, from the very inception of his conscious career, he had not liked his Christian name, despite the fact that it was a perfectly good English creation and was entered in all the standard dictionaries as a quick way to say *Gift of God*. His associates from the earliest times he could remember had taken an unkind advantage of that name to ridicule him and make him feel uncomfortable. Now he had lived a full thirty-five years upon this mundane sphere and the completeness of his failure in his every undertaking was remarkable for its persistency. He was indeed a veritable forlorn Hope, both literally and figuratively.

This singular mate of the Jinx took his first peep at daylight in the little town of Kilgore, Iowa, and, in doing this, made the great mistake of his life. Even the

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town where he was born never prospered, never fulfilled the promise of its youth. Away back in his earliest boyhood he remembered the citizens of the community made a grade for a railroad into the town. It was a splendid bed for a railroad, reaching a region which apparently was destined to enjoy enterprise and progress, but for some inexplicable reason the cuts and fills constructed at great cost of toil and money were all allowed to become overgrown with weeds, vines and briars. The railroads went to other towns, other cities sprang up and flourished and Kilgore fell more and more into decay. One night the Missouri river, on a rampage, cut in and around the town, leaving the store and blacksmith shop about three miles from the landing. The next night the river took a new tantrum, running the main channel through the main street of the village.

The ruthless stream shifted again later and Kilgore is only a sand bar and a memory now. Where once the land agent reared his guide-board pointing to "town lots for sale" the wild goose finds rest and shelter in the willows of the bar and the cottontail peels the tender saplings which have sprung up to hide from mortal ken the glory and the hopes of Hope's native town. The citizens left in the swamp lands have wrestled with fever and ague time about until there is little left for disease to fasten upon. It is said they are becoming web-footed

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and they don't know anything excepting how to shoot ducks and to come out on election day and vote the Republican ticket.

When the lad Hope was about thirteen years of age he remembered there was a season of unusual heat, drought and short crops. Owing to the scarcity of feed it became necessary for the farmers to cut and save all their corn fodder. During the subsequent winter, young Hope, with the gearing wheel of an old fanning mill, constructed a hand machine for cutting fodder and straw which worked successfully and was a great convenience. A neighbor, who was a carpenter, visited his father's farm and obtained permission to make a similar machine, using the boy's model. Afterwards this very carpenter secured letters of patent on the identical device, which has since, with some improvements, come into use throughout all agricultural countries, bringing fortunes to those who grasped the main chance by the forelock.

When sixteen years of age Hope, with cogs and wheels, gathered from a junk pile, constructed a hand cider mill, later patented and used all over the country, a machine the model of which has been but little improved to this day. At about this same period of his life the boy was compelled to gather apples in his father's orchard. He discovered the finest fruit grew on the longest slen-

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der twigs and was the most difficult to pick. With a boy's natural inclination to save labor, and with an ingenuity which seemed natural to him, he invented an apple-picker. His device was a long pole upon the end of which was attached a basket. A hook, worked by means of a lever, gathered the fruit, dropping it without bruises into the basket, which was padded and lined with soft elastic material. A boy friend of those days entered the patent office at Washington, D. C. some years later, and he was granted a patent on this very apple-picker, realizing a handsome income from a novel utility which is still largely used in all fruit-growing sections.

In the early days of the reaper and mower the most troublesome part of the machinery was the pitman rod, which was the source of constant annoyance owing to the breakage. The rod was a curved steel bar, necessarily so on account of the manner of its attachment to the sickle. At a fair held in St. Louis, Hope, then approaching his early manhood, while examining the machinery exhibit, suggested to a man in charge of the harvester exhibit for a large manufacturing concern that by the use of a ball and socket joint where the pitman attaches to the sickle the rod might be made straight. A drawing of the proposed improvement was made and the next year it was generally adopted by makers of har-

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est machinery and has yielded fortunes in royalties, not a cent of which went to the originator.

Forsooth the experiences of this man up to the very minute of his thirty-fifth birthday had been always of one tendency, to give him the worst of it. If he touched gold it became brass; if he staked his money on the ponies they became as slow as a New York surface street car; if he tipped his tongue to genuine maple syrup it immediately degenerated into glucose molasses; if he carved a porter-house steak it turned to concession beef; if he bought a sure-thing Panama hat the chances were that it would become a linoleum imitation before he could get home with it. Even moonshine whiskey—the sod corn barefooted—apparently lost its stimulating effect when taken with intent to fortify himself against the discouragements of life. He once invented a cocktail of superior quality, but he had not been able to afford to taste one of the delightfully refreshing decoctions in ten years!

And, oh the unhappy upshots and off-shoots of his ventures in the line of dallying with his romantic inclinations! He had ardently wooed many women, generally of a low type of intelligence, and he had received some heart-rending set-backs for his gallant efforts to find the one who could supply that which he lacked—luck, the most elusive stranger conceivable in his tortured brain. But, he never found the woman who cared to take the

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matrimonial leap with him, much to his chagrin. Even as practically all others could improve their hopes by winning the right sort of a helpmate he could not make anything like the progress of even a snail. No member of the weaker sex wanted this member of the stronger sex for the reason that he was so obviously a very, very weak member of it. He could not arrive even if they brought the place of arrival right up to him! He could not accomplish anything even resembling success. And, yet he was an inventive genius of the most promising sort!

Queer had been his life history and yet he was not at all queer in character or personality. All he ever aspired to be was a regular human being, with his share of happiness, but it seemed that neither fate or the people he met wanted him to be even this or to have even a look-in at mere contentment, and so, as a natural trend of events, he lost confidence in Fate and people, and, he wanted to be away from both. He had come to regard all women as low and all men as lower. He could find no exalted pinnacle upon which to place an ideal. In fact, as the middle mile-posts of his life were reached he firmly decided it was to his best interests to give up the battle so far as ingratiating himself with others extended, and to go it alone away from the usual haunts of humanity.



GIVEN C. HOPE HAD ACCUMULATED A CURIOUS OUTFIT OF
MECHANICAL PARAPHERNALIA, THE MOST OF WHICH
WAS PURCHASED AT JUNK YARDS

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When finally he departed from New York City, where he was almost totally unknown, despite his years of law-abiding residence there, he was controlled by the most peculiar determination, and, that was to invent as many of the things the human race most needed as he could and to give himself the supreme satisfaction of fighting like a fiend to prevent this same human race from ever gaining one iota therefrom. And, he had adroitly planned a way to let the world know what he was doing and what he had accomplished without ever letting this same world know who he was or where he secreted himself. He was positively uncanny in his desire for revenge extraordinary. He was bent on making mankind regret having treated him so miserably. He had been taunted and tantalized without mercy, and why should he be merciful in return after all he had endured in the way of hardships?

And, how did he leave New York City? By rail to a point near Portland, Maine, where he had been for months shipping piece by piece a most curious outfit of mechanical paraphernalia, the most of which was purchased at junk yards with the pennies he found it so difficult to accumulate. And, how did he leave the vicinity of Portland, Maine? By boat—a boat he had constructed himself. Nor was it at all crude, being equipped with two high-power motors and arranged to resort to sails in

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case of emergency. Moreover, it had an excellent wireless device of his own contrivance. To him this was the most important part of his whole layout, not for his own safety, but to serve as the means by which he could tantalize the whole world until it became as desperate as he had been practically his whole life. Although his boat was less than a hundred feet in length, it was thoroughly sea-worthy, and he was prepared for a protracted cruise, having enough food and water to last him fully a year. Undoubtedly he was unlike any other mariner of all times, because he had no fixed destination; he knew next to nothing about navigation and he certainly never intended to return to his home port! Nor was he seeking death.

And, where did he land? On a tiny, uncharted island somewhere near the Newfoundland banks, not more than two hundred miles out at sea. His first year as the lone inhabitant of this mere stepping-stone to the mainland was comparatively uneventful, due to the fact that he devoted his whole time to carefully and rather painfully preparing to carry out his strange project of teasing the world via wireless in sundry ingenious ways. Then suddenly mysterious and exciting things began to happen, causing consternation in the most unexpected quarters by upsetting all rules and regulations as well as all traditions of the sea. But what may we not expect

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from such a man as Given C. Hope, a remarkable genius with remarkably bad luck? Would not his resentment over his protracted ill fate be sufficient to make him accomplish almost super-human wonders once he got started? Is there anything more impelling than resolution born of bitter failure?

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CHAPTER II.

DEEPENED MYSTERIES OF THE DEEP.

EVERYWHERE in the vicinity of Newfoundland, ships and coast wireless stations were sorely perplexed. For two days the air had been full of extraordinary messages of warning couched in taunting terms. First it was believed that a near-maniac was recklessly operating a wireless somewhere in the tropics. Then a message, manifestly from regions in close proximity to Iceland, would upset such a theory and lead to the conviction that a strange master of science had come into being in some bleak and barren spot of the frigid north.

One of the most remarkably puzzling messages was received late in the afternoon of the second day. As picked up by numerous stations at sea and ashore it read :

Man needs the scientific principles and
devices I am creating, but man cannot have
same. Sea gulls are more appreciative.
Now worry....

Newspapers throughout the civilized world published sensational stories regarding these puzzling "flashes," advancing many wild theories as to their origin although admitting all efforts to locate the sender had been frustrated. However, finally two theories pre-

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dominated. One was that a practical joker had been having fun in a rather precarious manner, while the other was that a wireless operator had become demented.

There was a lapse of several days and then the seafaring world was startled by the receipt of the following warning :

Nobody else but me could know it, but terrific hurricane will sweep North Atlantic one month from today and shipping will suffer heavily because I am in oblivion with inventions which would defy worst storms. Man laughed at me ; now I can laugh.

The authorities of several different governments siezed upon this piece of audacity as a test. Weather experts everywhere were ordered to take particular pains to discover in advance this predicted elemental upheaval, but up to the day prior to the one designated every official report failed to give the slightest inkling of any atmospheric condition which might develop even an unusual squall. Forsooth, the whole month was one of the calmest in the history of sea navigation and no expert could find any scientific reason for expecting any sudden turnover of weather conditions. Meanwhile, not a single supplementary word had come from the unknown prophet.

Then at noon on the day he had named a most ter-

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rific hurricane broke loose all over the North Atlantic as if it had suddenly arisen from the very depths of hell. Ships by the scores were damaged and ships by the dozens were driven into distress. Several smaller vessels were wrecked and the shipping losses aggregated several millions of dollars. Within an hour after the storm abated the following retort came buzzing through the air :

This is same man who issued warning month ago. It's proof that man's social system and wanton greed keep many of best men down. Out of all humans who would help in this emergency, the one who could do most is down and out, a miserable unknown. But, now who's loony ?

Despite the utmost vigilance and a sea-wide search participated in by practically every ship afloat, no further intimation of the existence of this mystical mortal of the sea could be had and the world—yes, the whole world—was in a quandary. What a spectacular demonstration this had been of what people like to point out as the super-man ! What an uncanny revelation it all was to contemplate ! Was this some great teacher bent on making all mankind see and understand the foibles so common ?

No, it was not intentionally that. It was a man

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bearing a malice against people, and fate because what he knew he possessed in the way of ability to be useful had netted him only bitter disappointment and sorrow. He was a living example of the principle that a human being must have flowers before death if contentment is to reign supreme over any portion of this life. And it—for we must now refer to him as it since he had succeeded so wonderfully in throwing aside most of the traits of a regular human being after living a whole year in seclusion upon an island thoughtless man had not yet even noticed—yes, and it was Given C. Hope, now one of the most stalwart specimens of masculine power imaginable, truly a handsome man in all the term implies, but a hermit by inclination.

We must see him immediately after he had sent that I-told-you-so wireless in order to understand a man driven to extremes by untoward circumstances. Hatless he stood gazing out over the turbulent waves. The strong breeze tossed his long, raven-black hair almost furiously. His dark brown eyes of unusual large size seemed capable of penetrating miles of distance. Those eyes must have frightened his mother. Although his clean-shaven face was considerably bronzed, there was plenty of the pink of vigor in evidence on the cheeks. He wore a light brown woolen shirt with a soft collar which was accentuated by a firey red four-in-hand neck-

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tie. His trousers of steel-gray were neatly pressed. And he was the sole inhabitant of the whole island of probably four square miles! He had not seen a human being in a year, and he intended to never gaze upon one again. Fully six feet in height and an athlete in appearance, this man seemed formidable enough to go it alone anywhere.

"Now let them tear their hair in the ire born of ruthless taunting," he muttered as he kept his gaze fixed afar.

A sardonic smile flitted across his swarthy countenance only to be succeeded by an expression of angry hatred, an inward feeling which was made more impressive by the uncouth manner in which he gritted his teeth.

"They stole from me, trampled upon me and even denied me a fair chance to be happy, and now they are suffering," he murmured.

Nearby was his wireless station, not nearly as crude an affair as might be expected, and, it had many curious attachments never found on such structures. Those were inventions of his, inventions which made possible aerial ventriloquism to the extent of making it impossible to trace the source of his communications. His iron gaze softened into one of tender devotion as he turned it to his wireless. Then he smiled rather whimsically and the next minute he thought of man again, flying straightway

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into a rage which caused the summary death of a sapling which stood at his feet, for he yanked it up viciously and hurled it with tremendous force into the surf.

"God, how good You are to men to spare them from crossing my path," he exclaimed with vehemence as he looked up into the cloud-laden skies.

As if to make sure that the surging forces of hate within him would have full outlet, he leaped up to the lower branches of a quite large tree, and deliberately tore it apart bough after bough, seemingly enjoying the destructive energy required in such a herculean feat. In the estimation of deluded humanity this man was acting insanely. He was what the metropolitan police regard as a dangerous character, a menace to the safety of the public. And, he was, but he was not as crazy as one might suppose! He was a real man forced into the position of being unreal by conditions which he was entirely unable to control. He was only giving vent to his equally uncontrollable feelings, just as most everyone does in moments of aberration. But, just the same, God help any man who dared to confront him!

Meanwhile, the mysteries of the deep had been very much deepened by the curious mental gyrations which led him to electrify the world unaided and until his status could be established it was inevitable that the impression he had created would be indelible on every

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memory as one of the unexpected, unbelievable perplexities of a complex life. And, even so, anyone who could see him as he lived on that isolated spot, would sincerely pity the man burdened with the duty of converting him into a utility instead of a mystifying annoyance.

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CHAPTER III.

LOOKING FOR MARS.

THAT night found Given C. Hope taciturn and unusually melancholy. It was a perfectly clear and calm night with the stars shining brightly. All conditions were ideal for astronomical observations, and a man as eager as he was to get a glimpse of Mars and its inhabitants could not resist taking chances in order to appease his appetite for inventive adventure. He realized he always risked being discovered when he dared to experiment with his powerful radio searchlight, which had required seven months of his time to invent and perfect, but he must see who or what occupied the unexplored astral body which had for so many years baffled man.

He had built his own electrical plant, ingeniously using the mighty ocean's power to generate the electrical energy he needed, and he designed a light transmitting device which was wildly though hopefully calculated to penetrate the 36,000,000 miles of space between the earth and Mars.

Away back in 1892 he had been impressed by the announcement that Mars then approached the earth very closely and that from observations made, the theory of

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it being inhabited, while not absolutely determined, appeared to have received some degree of confirmation. He now felt that surely the Divine Creator had placed into life-breathing being some specimen superior to the mortals with whom he had been forced to contend, and he was convinced it would be rare consolation to at least be enabled to know positively that such a higher form of creature did exist somewhere in the universe. Explicitly, he still believed in the universe, although he had lost all confidence in the earth as man had made it.

For these reasons it happened he was in his observatory from early night until long past three o'clock in the morning and practically the whole time he kept the heavens thereabout ablaze with the truly dazzling shafts of light he was able to send out with his apparatus. But, it was all a vain effort: he could not even find Mars, and, finally, he became thoroughly fatigued. His hand moved wearily towards the switch to once more turn it off in defeat.

At that instant he thought he heard a faint buzz new to his ears.

He was instinctively startled—so much so his hand was stayed. He listened very intently for a moment. The buzzing noise became more distinct. The alarmed listener promptly concluded he was not suffering from

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an hallucination. But he strained his hearing capacity to its utmost in feeble hopes he was mistaken, and, the buzz only became the plainer until he could not doubt that something approached, even that lonely, out-of-the-way spot. In his excitement he forgot his searchlight. He rushed out of his observatory and mounted an adjacent ridge, taking a quick survey of all the surrounding water in quest of a ship's light. But, no light crossed his line of vision despite the fact that the buzz had by now become recognizable as the hum of a powerful motor.

Then the startled man recalled that there were such things as aeroplanes, and he diverted his stare to the skies, being soon rewarded by discovering a tiny red light away above the horizon of the ocean. In awe he watched this light increase in size until it was nearly directly overhead, at which time he could plainly hear the well-timed explosions in the mighty engine of the aircraft. At this belated moment he remembered his searchlight, simultaneously being reminded that he did not want any mortal to know his location.

Hastily he ran to his observatory and as might be expected of his luck, he experienced delaying difficulty in operating his switch. In anger and trepidation he yanked at that switch. At the same time his gaze was riveted to the space illuminated by his light. Then he

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saw something which profoundly amazed him. It was the surprised and inquisitive face of a young woman, looking down over the edge of the fuselage of a giant hydro-aeroplane speeding through space at the rate of at least a hundred miles an hour. It was only a very brief flash, but Given C. Hope was sure a woman in a seaplane had flown through his shaft of light, although five minutes later there was not a single trace of the machine either by sound or sight, and, this hater of people was once more left undisturbed to his endless view of water and the groaning and lashing of the breakers against his small land.

An hour later Hope was in his hut sleeping soundly. He should have been tired enough to sleep most of the morning, but just at daylight, he leaped straight out of his bunk, wide-awake and stared all around the place nervously. Then he frowned as he muttered, "Curse a nightmare anyway." He yanked at his red necktie and tried to figure out why he had forgotten to undress himself prior to retiring, "I guess I am going crazy," he told himself as he began to unfasten the tie. But, he only began, because at that instant he realized what he imagined he heard in his wild, fitful dream, he was now actually hearing. It was that terrorizing buzz!

Almost madly he leaped out of his hut and mounted the nearby ridge, fixing his gaze on the very horizon over

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which the seaplane had winged its way a short time before. There he beheld it listing dangerously. First it would seem to fall and then it would be forced to rise slightly again only to resume another rapid descension. One of its wings looked to be nearly collapsed and the wild course it followed certainly betrayed its distress. It was evident the pilot was battling desperately to reach his island, and for reasons inexplicable to him, this lone witness to the spectacle wished she might make it! After all perhaps his hatred for humanity did not extend to the limits which would make him relish seeing game people perish.

The instant he realized his assistance might be needed, he ran at top speed to a cove where his boat was securely fastened. Frantically he started to make preparations to put to sea, but ere he had made much progress, the giant plane swooped down on the water within twenty feet of him, and a second later crashed into an overhanging rock ledge free from the breakers, but wrecked and deathly quiet. With agility unimpaired by his trembling the man made his way to the crushed machine. The first thing to attract his eye was the pale face of a young man. His body was underneath the heavy engine, the weight of which had crushed the breath of life out of him. With augmented horror, Hope tore his way through the wreckage. Next he hastily crawled

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underneath. An instant later he was searching the sand all around the plane. Then he stopped short.

"My God, what became of the woman!" he exclaimed.

"Here I am, safe and sound," he heard a sweet, well modulated voice reply.

He turned his face seaward just in time to catch a glimpse of a golden-haired girl, in trim aviation trousers and jacket, racing through the last breakers which could reach her. Before he could recover from his surprise sufficiently to answer or move, she had reached his side, paused and saluted, and raced over to the wreckage.

"Oh, oh, poor Matty," he heard her moan as she hastened to the dead man's side.

She tenderly laid her hand upon his face and withdrew it with a shiver. A moment later the girl fell in a heap on the sand and wept bitterly.

Given C. Hope, glued to the spot he had occupied for fully two minutes, simply stared blankly at the tragic scene. He seemed almost in a stupor. Even his body scarcely swayed until suddenly the girl lifted her head and shot a reproachful glance at him.

"Well, why don't you help him?" she demanded.

Hope hesitated long before answering.

"Even a live man can't get help in this world let alone a dead one," he replied finally in surly tones, which



"WHY DON'T YOU DO SOMETHING TO HELP MATTY?" SHE DEMANDED.

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quite upset the girl.

"Sir!" she exclaimed rather involuntarily as she arose abruptly as if to prepare to meet an adversary.

Hope started to reply and then clamped his teeth together viciously. He concentrated his very big eyes on her a moment longer and then turned his back upon her, subsequently walking leisurely away. She was too dazed to say more. She could only stare at him in bewilderment. Exciting events were coming far too rapidly for her frazzled nerves, and it was a God-send that she was more stupefied than frightened. However, she did wonder what might happen to her now since she was at the mercy of this strange and apparently hardhearted man. Almost instantaneously some of her fears on this score were allayed, because Hope experienced a slight change of heart as he reached the ridge which would hide him from her sight. He stopped and looked down upon the girl.

"There'll be plenty of food and water for you until I can find some way to get you back to where you belong," he assured her rather gruffly.

Words utterly failed the girl, because she was not sure whether she wanted to thank the man or hate him. He did not wait long for a reply, jumping down behind the ridge suddenly.

"Well, what do you think of that!" the girl remark-

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ed after waiting in vain for the man to show himself again.

She stared straight into empty space momentarily and then upon making a cursory examination of her plane, her gaze again fell on the pallid face of her erstwhile jovial companion.

"Oh God, this is awful," she moaned. "And, to think I have no loyal pal left to help me in my battle with that terrible creature!"

Not lacking anything in lachrymal ability which so often stays woman in good stead, she resumed her weeping. After devoting at least ten minutes to this sort of true relief, she dried her tears and became indignant. Wasn't this man going to be respectful enough to come back and help her bury the dead? She was going to insist upon giving poor Matty a decent burial! It was an outrage for a man to walk away from a helpless woman and leave her to do all her worrying without aid! By all means he must repair her plane, so she could return to the United States! Thereupon the girl half laughed and half cried: "How foolish! What would that uncouth man know about repairing an aeroplane!" she reminded herself.

* * * * *

For two long hours this girl exerted all the strength she could summon in an effort to clear the wreckage of

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her plane enough to be able to extricate the body of the victim. All the while she was wondering why that live man did not return to assist her, and, also all the while she was wondering why she could not arouse herself to the point of going in search of him. When it became evident to her that she could never remove the heavy motor from Matty's body, she decided her one recourse to be to explore the island from one end to the other until she found her one human hope. However, her reluctance to abandon the dead kept her torn between indecision and inactivity for another hour.

"Well, I haven't much left to lose and perhaps much to gain, so here goes," she ultimately told herself and then she set out to beard the den of the strangest man she had ever met.

It was high noon before the girl realized her physical strength was deserting her. She had tramped over most of the island, penetrating thickets and scaling rugged ridges galore all with a sort of numb nonchalance so far as her own welfare was concerned. She had even crawled into a natural cave in her bold resolution to find the man she sought. She had visited his hut and his boat a half a dozen times, and when after all this thorough-going search she did not find even a trace of him, she was deeply mystified. It was inevitable that she should relax and wearily she wended her way back to

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her ill-fated machine with the idea of maintaining a vigil over the departed one while she regained her composure in general.

But there was to be no rest for the time being as her first view of the landing-place of the plane enlightened her. Indeed, the machine seemed to be quite righted and Matty's body was gone! The girl felt her nerves tingle with excited fear. Something truly uncanny, even ghoulish, had happened according to her first impression. She made a hasty inspection of the machine. It had not been repaired, but it was placed in a position which would permit speedy work on its various damaged parts. No one man could have handled so much weight. And, what became of the remains of the man who had died under that weight?

As if guided by intuition the girl finally turned a fleeting glance to a dell situated on the highest land some thirty feet away from the beach proper, and, there she saw a new grave upon which rested a lone wild flower. A moment later she was kneeling at that grave and not many seconds afterwards she had decided to immediately resume her search for the man who had such eccentric ways of doing things. Quick action followed the decision, and she just reached the summit of an adjoining ridge in time to see a red neck-tie laying taut on the ground. She recognized it as the outstanding feature

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of the attire of the man who had treated her so strangely and quick as a flash she grabbed it, giving it an energetic yank when she discovered it to be attached to some resisting force. This act on her part brought a round section of the earth up as a hinged door and there protruding from the consequent orifice was the head of Given C. Hope.

A quick wit came to the girl's assistance.

"You know, sir, I always hated loud, red ties until I saw this one," she said to the man who now seemed rather disconcerted because his means of disappearing had been discovered. "Of course I know you won't ask why, and so I'm going to tell you that this very red tie was the landmark that helped me to steer the course to this island. Why, I saw the crazy thing when I was away up over that horizon. And, I don't know but what I might have heard it, too."

Surely no man could be immune to this sort of friendly vivacity, especially when the girl was, in the vernacular of the classiest boulevards, some girl. But it did not feaze Hope. On the contrary, he resented every word she uttered, and he would have given his good right arm to be rid of his unwelcome guest that instant.

The girl waited eagerly for a reply, and when the man's silence became embarrassing she ventured another

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sally and then another, but all to no avail.

"Gee, you're a funny fellow," she finally bantered. "What is the big idea? And—and—" as she began to lose her nerve upon noting how unchanging was, his piercing, unfathomable stare, "and what were you doing with that powerful searchlight last night?"

Hope took one deep breath, snatched his necktie free from the girl's grasp and in deep, surly tones said:

"Looking for Mars."

While the girl was still gasping her surprise over receiving even that much of an answer, the man's head dropped out of sight and the heavy lid which he had been holding up with his hand, slammed shut.

The girl was once more alone and dismayed. Her every attempt to force an entrance into the secret passageway was futile. Fortunately her sunny disposition came to her rescue again, just in time to save her from nervous prostration, for she actually smiled when she said unto herself aloud:

"Well, there does seem to be at least one pastime on this God-forsaken place—I can while away some hours looking for Mars."

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CHAPTER IV.

HIDE AND SEEK AND THEN—

IT was another day. It had been a terrible night. The girl had found no trace of the man as yet, and, she had, as a last resort, appropriated his abandoned hut, but her sleep was seriously disturbed. Several times she was rudely awakened by queer noises. Twice she was positive she had heard human sobs. Another time she was sure she bestirred herself just in the nick of time to save her life, because she knew she saw the form of a man run out of the hut. Nevertheless she maintained a certain amount of stoical resignation throughout all her thrilling experiences, and another day found her well fortified with determination to get back to her dear old home in New York City, even though she might have to commit rash acts to succeed in her purpose.

The sun came up early in a clear sky, and so far as she could ascertain it was an ideal day for flying, but she was aware of the necessity of having strong assistance before she could even start to fly under the best of conditions. Where was this man? Perhaps curiosity had taken him back to her seaplane, and so, she fairly raced to the conveyance she had suddenly come to covet

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as a means to the end which would conclude her days of wild adventure in the happy security of home, sweet home. And she found the machine apparently as good and as staunch as ever. The wing which had been crumpled was perfectly rigid again, and the whole outfit had been turned completely around, its nose pointing seaward. Tacked on the propeller was a white sheet of paper. The girl climbed down off the ledge to see what information this would give. And, there was a note, which read:

WOMAN—First be sure you know your compass well, then push button under steering-wheel, and you're off. Don't bother looking me up, because it won't do you any good; in fact, it might bring serious harm to you.—MAN.

There was a recipient with blinking eyes even after re-reading this note. "What a document and what a man!" was her comment. "And, what does he mean; button under steering-wheel—a self-starter on an aeroplane? I had no such contrivance when I started."

Investigation revealed the fact that her plane had been very much improved in more ways than one, and in a surprisingly short space of time. Most noticeable of all was a curiously frail iron rod which seemed solidly

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attached to the mere sand.

"What's this?" the girl asked herself as she scrutinized the new addition to her property. When she found she could not budge the rod she answered herself: "I don't know." As if guided by some kind spirit she climbed up into the fuselage and there pinned to the seat was another note. This one read:

Oh yes, I forgot to tell you that you must pull the lever to your right before you can start at all. However, of course, your engine can be going its merriest beforehand.

A pair of feminine eyes blinked some more. "Gee, am I dreaming?" queried a feminine tongue. And, in a jiffy that tongue fairly wagged. "For the love of Pete, who is this guy! If he's not plumb crazy, he's somewhat of a genius. Why, if these things will work, they'll make flying a pleasure instead of a danger. There's no use talking (to myself), before I leave this dump in the ocean I've got to get better acquainted with this queer man. We may need him very much back in the States."

Impulsiveness was a second nature with this girl, and, without going a single step further with her inspection of the machine, she leaped up the ridge and trotted

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from shore to shore on that island, calling "Man" at the top of her voice! Two hours of this earnest endeavor netted her a grand total of "nothing doing," as she expressed it, but she would persevere.

It was another noonday, before she had seen anything which resembled reward, and this was only a piece of red cheese-cloth wafted aimlessly by the breezes. But, as bitter as was this disappointment, she would not give up—she continued to look for the man she must interview to her heart's content before she would even think of flying away from his sphere.

Right in the middle of the afternoon in the midst of her chase, this same girl became obsessed with the idea that she should hide, and she did—right in the very cave she had previously explored. A full half an hour she laid on her stomach and was thereby notified of its emptiness. She recalled her rough host's promise of food and she resolved to force him to make good. Just as she was in the act of crawling out of the cave, she heard the crunching sound of footsteps in adjacent gravel. She paused cautiously, raising her head in an attempt to survey the outer surroundings of the cave's entrance. The feet seemed to approach and she waited. How long she waited, hearing the unmistakable foot-tread all the while, she did not realize, but it was considerably more than another half an hour.

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"How strange," the perplexed girl finally muttered. "He must be walking around in a circle. It's up to me to find out what's wrong with this gink."

So she abandoned caution, climbing right up to the highest point in the vicinity, and she did not see a single sign of a human being nor did the footsteps discontinue as she suspected they would! Now she was nonplussed. Perplexity soon succumbed to intensified dread. Her desire to meet this man again was suddenly submerged in the apprehension that she might encounter him once too often. But she was hungry and besides she could not endure the almost maddening regularity with which those invisible feet continued to advance over the gravel right under her very nose. Hence she fled from the spot as if her life depended upon super-human celerity. Just why the hut was her objective is difficult to comprehend, but she was inside that crude structure within three minutes and there was a piping-hot dinner all ready for her!

"Say, this fellow is a mind-reader," she soliloquized as a feeling of gratitude and reassurance swept over her.

She lost little time in getting down to the home-made table, and the way she devoured food was anything but conventional. As she ate she marveled at the excellence of the cuisine. There was an abundance of hot corned beef mixed with a most palatable vegetable, which at least resembled cabbage. There were hot boiled beans

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well seasoned with a sauce new to her, and there was a dish she took to be fruit salad, together with good black coffee and fresh corn bread. There was all of this when the near-starved girl sat down, but there was not a semblance of any of it left when she had finished.

Wholesome food is the most efficacious of all stimulants, and this meal put new vigor and nerve into this girl. With her ravenous appetite appeased and feeling much refreshed, she became exceedingly determined to find her benefactor instantler. But she changed her tactics, resolving to try a clever subterfuge to attract him from his hiding-place. So she walked hastily to her seaplane, pausing to study for a moment. Presently she crawled underneath and did her best to make herself appear to be pinioned under the edge of one of the heavy pontoons. As soon as she was satisfied with the pretended precariousness of her predicament she began screaming lustily. Forsooth, she yelled for help until she became decidedly hoarse and eventually she had to desist her vocal efforts out of sheer exhaustion. Much disappointed over the lack of results she rolled away from the pontoon, buried her head in her arms and wept convulsively. And, she cried herself to sleep unmindful of a rising tide.

Fifteen minutes later she awakened to find herself pretty much surrounded by a menacing sea. In arising

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to her feet she became confused and lost her footing, rolling seaward. A powerful undertow caught her and dragged her far out despite her frantic struggling. She managed to take a quick survey of the shore as she was dragged away from it, and her heart sank in despair when she failed to find the man there ready to rescue her.

For many minutes this comparatively frail girl battled with the tempestuous currents always in a desperate effort to keep as close to land as possible. By exerting her supreme strength she managed to swim her way around to the extreme northern end of the island. There she espied the man she had searched for so many hours. He was sitting on a promontory with his face buried in his hands. The girl summoned all her remaining strength to scream for help. It was a shrill, terrifying scream. He heard it and sighted the distressed one. Promptly he went into the surf, reaching her just as she felt her consciousness ebbing away from her.

When she regained her senses the girl found herself wrapped in a blanket and lying on a bunk in the hut. The man was sitting calmly beside her, gazing intently into her eyes.

"Well," she exclaimed jovially. "I see the sea is better at finding you than I am."

"You should have known better than to go in bath-

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ing alone in such a rough sea," he remarked rather caustically without heeding her buoyancy of spirit.

"I didn't go in—I was taken in over my protests."

"Who is there here to take you in except me?" he snapped.

"Why, didn't you know he was here?" she asked with feigned surprise.

"Who?"

"Mr. Undertow of Ocean," she replied with a merry twinkle in her eyes.

"Listen, I don't like people or their jokes," he warned most solemnly. "And I've just figured out how I can use you to make my dislikes better known among all peoples."

"That sounds interesting even if it is ridiculous," was the girl's bold rejoinder. "How can you use me?"

"I'm going to show you what I can do and then you're going to fly back to America and rave about me," he announced.

"Me rave about you or any other man? Never! I'd choke first."

He eyed the girl a trifle sternly. He was not impressed by her precocious words.

"I'll wager you're a suffragette," he suggested after noting her smile had vanished.

"You bet I am and I'm militant too," she admitted

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enthusiastically. "But what has that to do with this proposition you have in mind?"

"Nothing," he replied and after a pause continued, "excepting it is one more reason why I want to hurry and get rid of you."

"I'd like to say something back, but I won't," she snapped saucily. "Anyway, as I seem to be destined to early deportation I'll have to hurry to finish all the questions I've got to ask about funny noises such as footsteps and things."

"You needn't trouble yourself to ask even one question."

"Not even your name?" she interrupted.

"No."

"Well, I wouldn't be that stingy," she reproached. "I'll tell you my name without your asking even. It's Gwen Dale—that's me and—"

A vicious wave of the man's hand was enough to silence her.

"Trivialities are unnecessary and there's no time to be lost," he declared. "I want you back in the United States by day after tomorrow."

"But, do you know, that's not where I was originally bound for?" she almost demanded.

"I don't care," he answered back in surly tone.

"Just the same I'm going to tell you that poor Matty

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and I were headed for Europe when something went wrong with the engine and I beat it back for your search-light. I want to be the first woman to pilot an aeroplane across the Atlantic—that's my supreme ambition."

"Ambition!" the man exclaimed as he arose to his feet with an abruptness which denoted anger.

"Yes, ambition," the girl repeated. "What's the matter with that?"

Given C. Hope paced the floor fiercely for a full minute. Unhappy, even maddening memories crowded his brain. After he had knocked a chair over, he stopped short, faced the girl who had raised herself to a sitting position, due to fear, and spoke deliberately in guttural tones as he shook his fist ominously:

"Ambition! The most damnable curse of anyone's life unless there is some fool luck to help out."

"Quite true, but why get mad about it?" she put in, quickly regaining her composure.

"Because that's the thing that has driven me mad—it is that thing because humanity is thoughtless and cruel by nature—because, but why am I making a speech to you? All I need to do is show what a mistake men and women—and the whole social system, has made in ignoring me and scorning me, in stealing from me and denying me a chance to overcome my difficulties. I am going to show you a dozen devices—creations of my muddled

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brain—devices mankind absolutely must have to prevent the oncoming degeneration. I am going to show you why humanity will never get an opportunity to profit by or to even see a single achievement of mine. Then you're going back to civilization and rave about me, but it will all be in vain, for you or no one else will ever see me again."

Hope's face was firey-red when he finished his denunciatory declaration of purpose. The muscles in his swarthy face twitched as he contemplated the girl. He was obviously boiling over with resentment and grim if not even malicious resolution. His whole attitude was that of one bent on attaining revenge.

Gwen Dale was too dumfounded to utter a sound. She had been totally unprepared for such a forensic detonation. She never dreamed this man could talk so much and so well. She realized she admired his spunk if not his ideas. She could easily discern the great power he had developed within his very soul, for he spoke from a deeper source than the heart. And, as she watched him standing there in that barren room, clenching his fists convulsively she made a mental note of his strong manly features. He was really handsome until those big frightening eyes of his flashed and then he was rather repulsive. She wondered how a man could have such artistically curved and decidedly ruby lips as his and then as he started to speak again she observed the perfect

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white teeth he had.

"Now, you may have all the privacy you desire in this home of mine," he continued in low, mild tones. "I would suggest that you use my overalls there while your clothes are drying. I'll return for you an hour from now and then you shall see all the damnation of ambition you could relish."

With these words Hope stalked out of the hut.

Gwen Dale blinked her eyes again and again. She wondered if she had been dreaming, and if she was really in her Riverside Drive apartment after all. One glance at the ceiling of rough bark convinced her she was right where she was, on the verge of seeing the inner portals of a man's soul, such as few girls are ever privileged to view, and, in a state of keen anticipation, she proceeded to prepare to don his overalls.

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CHAPTER V.

A NIGHT OF REVELATIONS.

The shades of night had fallen when Given C. Hope called at his hut for Gwen Dale. She was attired in his overalls, which were several times too large for her. He still wore the one outfit in which she had seen him, including the red necktie, but his hair was more neatly combed.

"It's just as well that you're wearing overalls to-night," he said. "You may be around a lot of grease."

"Well, I'm glad I pass muster, because I feel like a fright," she replied as she scanned her costume.

"Come on," was his succinct response as he led the way out the door.

Either on account of her curiosity or for fear of arousing her escort's ire, Gwen deemed it advisable to make reticence her stock in trade from the inception on this occasion. She seemed to divine that the man wanted to do most of the talking. However, his utterances during a twenty-minute stroll were few and far apart. He was apparently more morose than ever. He was inclined to keep very deeply engrossed in studious thoughts. Withal he had the air of one entirely confident and sure of himself.

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The first place he took the girl was to his observatory. Immediately he moved a switch and a dazzling light shot into the heavens. He directed his guest to look into a brass-lined telescope of not more than twelve inches in length. Then he pushed a button, simultaneously adjusting what looked like a lens.

"Great guns!" she exclaimed.

"What's the matter?" he asked naively.

"I'm seeing Mary Pickford in movies," she asserted.

"Correct! And, a planet some millions of miles away is the screen upon which you're seeing the picture."

"Impossible!" the girl gasped in her irrepressible amazement.

"All right," he retaliated. "See this glass slide?" He held it aloft. "I'll flash it New Yorkwards. It'll be visible there high in the air."

The next instant the girl saw emblazoned on the sky-line afar the following sign,

HAVE HOPE!
THE BEST YET!

"What you read now, you will read one week from tonight from your own home window, for I will flash it again on that night from here," he announced.

"Well, I'll be darned," was her comment.

"It's something new, making possible long-distance

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advertising or long-distance bulletin service," he explained. "Wouldn't mankind like to have such a marvelous utility?"

"I should say so," she agreed.

"Well, mankind will never get a chance to make use of my device. Come on."

Thereupon he turned off his switch and all was darkness.

Ten minutes later the couple stood at the entrance to the cave in which the girl had hidden during the day. The man pursed his lips. The girl responded by remaining motionless. A moment later she heard those mysterious footsteps in the gravel again. At first she felt herself getting nervous, for it was an unpleasant gritting sound.

"What is that?" she asked with emphasis.

"That's the forces of the earth harnessed to my will through scientific principles with which I am alone familiar," he informed her. "You see it stops when I raise my foot from this steel plate." He raised his foot and there was dead silence instantly. "Now I step on the plate again and the action is resumed." He replaced his foot on the plate and the grinding noise started all over.

"Remarkable!" she exclaimed. "And do you know when I heard that today I thought it was you coming my way at last?"

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"It's far more important."

"What is it?"

"Intensive gravity, I term it."

"What use can be made of it?"

"Unlimited power—tons and tons of it—all the dead weight of this island is now generated, inverted and concentrated into fifteen square feet here."

"How do you do it?" she blurted right out still unimpressed by the fact that this man was exceedingly sensitive.

"That's my secret," he snapped rather savagely.

"Pardon the inquisitive woman," she begged promptly.

He paid no attention to her apology. Instead he continued:

"Through this medium a highly explosive condition could be created. I could blow up this entire island with this natural force."

Gwen Dale shivered. This was information such as would make anyone uncomfortable.

"But, there are peaceful and useful ways this power can be engaged to help man with his more arduous tasks wherein great weights are involved, such as moving heavy machinery and even buildings," he finished and thereupon the grinding noise ceased.

After a long, rough journey to the ocean's edge,

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where Hope filled a tin bucket with salt water, he took the girl to a dugout well-lighted by electricity. He called her attention to a white stone vat in which there was a large quantity of bone-dry substance resembling fine gravel. While she still peered into this receptacle he dashed the water into it. Immediately he placed the bucket under a spigot at the bottom of the tank and allowed the fluid to flow in until the original sediment was thoroughly drained. Taking the bucket he beckoned the girl to follow him. Upon reaching a knoll some fifty feet away, he deposited it on the ground and walked twenty feet away, pulling the girl along with him. Then he took from his pocket a small piece of flare which he lighted and flung at the bucket. It fell on the ground at least a foot short of its mark, but a spark was seen to fly therein. Instantly there was a surprisingly terrific explosion. A hot wave hit the girl's face and she blinked her eyes very rapidly as she staggered back.

"Gee!" she exclaimed, as she realized she was unhurt.

"It's better than the best gasoline and it costs virtually nothing in time and money to manufacture," he remarked quietly.

"Oh yes, I remember reading about something like it," she declared. "It was reported the Standard Oil Company paid a million dollars to keep the stuff off the

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market."

"I doubt the story," he replied, "but no one will ever have a chance to offer me a penny for my formula."

So saying he walked leisurely away without even bidding his guest to follow, but she followed just the same.

It was not many minutes later that the pair stood at Hope's wireless station.

"Now, I'm going to worry humanity a little," he announced as he began scribbling on a sheet of paper. "Another mysterious message shall go forth to set the world by its ears."

Right then and there it dawned on Gwen Dale that the several queer communications which had stirred the populace everywhere, due to the sensational manner in which the newspapers had "played up" the story, emanated from the very spot she that minute occupied.

"Now it is getting interesting," she mentally told herself. Then she realized he had thrust the sheet of paper into her hands. Even as she perused, he was operating a curious sending key and there was a crackling in the air all around her. And, here is what she read:

Gwen Dale, American aviatrix, marooned in air near Azores, her plane hanging stationary 3,000 feet above ocean. Some

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fool inventor put new attachment on machine; she doesn't know how to operate it. She is determined to get back to New York day after tomorrow. Don't queer people live in oblivion though!

"Say, what's the joke?" she demanded aloud.

"Won't it be a joke!" he replied guilelessly, as he increased his efforts at his key. "And, the best part of the joke is, all the erudite experts will swear the message came direct from the Azores."

Gwen Dale was actually stunned. She simply could not find her tongue. She knew she was witnessing genius in action. She could only stare at the man whose intentions she still doubted. He now looked decidedly repulsive to her, despite his proven ability for doing things one would expect from a veritable miracle man. How could he even think of trifling with the whole world in such a fashion? Was he deranged after all? Had she been the innocent victim of a wild man's hallucinations? While she pondered thus all confused, he gave his key a final tap and confronted her.

"Now the New York newspapers will have something for their front pages tomorrow morning," he said. "You'll hear about it when you get back."

"I should say so, if that's the message they got," she

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replied as she clutched the sheet of paper she held in her hands.

"That's the very message they got and not a human soul could trace its true source," he declared emphatically. "It's another one of my inventions which would be useful, but I won't give anyone a chance to steal it. You know I can send a wireless clear around the world and receive it myself right in the sending station."

"But, sir, I cannot resist making known my resentment of the misrepresentation in this message you say you have just sent broadcast," the girl persisted as her conscience began to bother her.

"Nor can I resist my relentless resentment of man's treatment of me before I decided to give up the battle I could have won so easily and beneficially to all," he replied. "Anyway, if you don't watch yourself, you'll find yourself hanging stationary in the air when you fly that plane of yours again."

"You mean—"

"I mean I was foolish enough to give you the benefit of one of my proudest achievements—an automatic combination of aerial stabilizer, elevator, and anchor. There's one on your machine now, and I shall know that when you fly away from me you cannot fall, barring extraordinary acts of God. The only question in my mind is, will you have food enough on board to keep you alive in case

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you get stalled mid-air and can't navigate again soon."

Now Gwen Dale was all muddled. What was this man talking about? She heard every word he uttered, but she simply could not grasp the full import of his statements, just as a vast majority of all the human beings fail to sense the presence of our greatest talent outside of the realm of the famous and the acclaimed. Skepticism swayed this girl far away from this man. She felt prone to laugh at him. Yet, she pitied him a little. He was most likely hopelessly insane, according to her main version of it. She forgot that Jules Verne was ridiculed erroneously and that submarines did more later than even he dared to predict in his wild, fanciful fiction. She forgot how people had roared with mirth when someone ventured to be serious in prophesies regarding the conquering of the air. Oh yes, she forgot how easily possible a great many "impossibilities" had become under the duress of the persistent genius of certain men.

So her next words were:

"I guess we're a couple of rummies."

This was like the spark in the bucket. It precipitated a terrific explosion like a flash.

"You little fool you!" Given C. Hope yelled, "You're precisely like your kind—the human race, I mean. Your one asset is doubt alloyed with ridicule. You are as heartless as you are pretty. You—but what's the use,

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what is the use?"

The thoughtless, little Gwen was perceptibly sobered up by this excoriation. At last she realized it would be a grave error to continue her inherent flippancy, a non-chalance she had relied upon to maintain her courage. It was high time that she display a serious interest in this fellow if she was to fly away satisfied. Anyway, she simply had to admire him in spite of all his gloom and prejudice. And now she must know all about him, his past and definitely his plans for the future. So now she spoke in a completely new spirit.

"Please forgive me for my repeated offenses in addressing you," she began. "I was pretending carelessness because I was afraid of you."

"I knew that," he averred. "And you did have cause to fear me. I went into the hut while you slept last night with the intention of making it your last sleep, but I changed my mind. I argued there was no sense in me committing murder even though mankind's attitude towards me had always been murderous to my hopes."

The girl suppressed a shiver and retained a set determination to draw the man out.

"Tell me all about your disappointments," she urged. "Perhaps I can help you."

"No, you can't help me a bit," he denied. "However, you can repay me for what I've done to your sea-

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plane by seeing to it that the press gets a full report of the revelations I have offered tonight. I want such publicity as my revenge, a revenge which will be sweetened by the knowledge that no mortal can profit by my inventions and discoveries. Mind you, this is a determination on my part—it is not an aspiration. In fact, the only ambition I have is to see what there is on Mars. Now, will you tell them about the genius you found in the sea-bound depths of oblivion?"

"Yes," she promised.

"Then we need to proceed no farther," he replied coldly.

"But, I must know your name first of all," she insisted.

Thereupon he lapsed into deep study.

"You see they would never believe my story if such essential details as the name and a former address were lacking," she added.

"I guess you're right," he finally replied. "But before I give this information, you must pledge on your word of honor that you will never attempt to see me or my island again, nor you must not direct others here. Do you swear you will meet these conditions?"

"I—er—"

"Yes or no?"

"But you see I might get awfully lonesome and want

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to come back," she ventured coyly.

"Come back! What for?" he demanded.

"To see more of the wonders of a wonderful man," she confessed, casting furtive glances at the man.

He was obviously astonished. He was also flattered, for he had his share of egotism. He even fell to wondering whether or not this girl was falling in love with him. Forthwith he resolved to ascertain this.

"What do you mean for me to infer?" he asked in kinder tones than had been his wont.

"I—I—but now you embarrass me," she stammered.

"I don't want to embarrass you; I desire to set you straight," he reassured.

"Set me straight? How?" she asked.

"By convincing you of the futility of romancing with me."

This bold stroke did embarrass Gwen Dale very much, especially when she found herself without words to retort promptly and appropriately. The longer she remained silent the worse it looked for her chances of entering a sound denial.

"What's the matter with me all of a sudden?" she asked of him appealingly after making three attempts to say something else.

"You've got me puzzled, woman," was his answer.

She straightened right up with a trace of indigna-

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tion as she retaliated with these tell-tale words:

"Well, I won't permit the man I love to call me 'woman' in such a sense."

He shrugged his shoulders. "That let's me out. Hence I'll continue to call you what you are, woman, whenever it pleases me."

Right away Gwen got to thinking about cavemen and their unsavory proclivities, and this with a realization that she was gradually weakening in her life-long antagonism towards men as a result of getting better acquainted with this eccentric recluse, led her to decide it was time for her to retire for the night.

"May I not be excused now?" she asked timidly and as she smothered a forced yawn added: "I'm dreadfully tired and sleepy and I know you will protect me from harm while I rest."

"Yes, I will protect you," he promised quite gently.

"Thank you," and she smiled radiantly at him.

"You'll be more than welcome if you boost me to the high skies when you get back to America."

"I'll sure do that with a zest," she agreed. "Now for your name."

"I've decided you don't need to know it. Come on."

So saying he led the way across the island and the

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quick return of his gruff manner of speech led the girl to decide to defer pressing him for the information. Anyway she figured she had had her share of revelations for one night.

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CHAPTER VI.

A DAY OF CONFIDENCES.

AN ideal spring day followed. The air was balmy and the sun seemed to be more gloriously golden than it ever had been before.

Gwen Dale awakened early much refreshed by a sound, undisturbed sleep. She started humming a love song as soon as she arose, and she took particular pains in dressing herself in her aviation suit. She found a perfectly good comb, brush and mirror and she arranged her fluffy golden hair its prettiest. As she looked into the mirror she noted that her large blue eyes were unusually clear. She wondered why they were not blood-shot after all she had gone through. She also noted with pride that her complexion was decidedly pink.

"It seems nature has fixed me all up for a conquest," she told herself and then she laughed aloud.

When presently she walked out of the hut door, she was pleased to find Given C. Hope, whom she knew only as the man, sitting alert on a knoll some twenty feet away.

"Well, good morning," she greeted cordially.

"Good morning," he acknowledged without the slightest trace of a smile.

"Did you sleep well?" she inquired with concern.

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"Not much—guards are not supposed to sleep at all while on duty," he replied.

"Do you mean you have been actually guarding over me all night?"

"Yes, right here—I kept my word in this case just as I expect you to keep your word when you go back," he said.

Gwen sat down beside him. She was delighted to note that he was observing her hair without his usual frown.

"Do you like the way I have my hair arranged this morning?" she asked, giving him a smile.

"Oh, it's all right, but why do you evade the subject I have brought up?"

The girl felt a slight pique and she wanted to pout, but a better judgment prevailed and she decided to pursue a seriously frank course.

"I don't mean to evade," she declared. "On the contrary, I hope you and I will be quite frank with each other today."

"You should be frank, but it doesn't matter about me," was his reply.

"Oh yes it does," she insisted, "because I am much interested in you, and I really want to do you a good turn in the hopes we may meet again under more fortunate circumstances."

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This was candor of the eye-opening variety, and Hope's eyes widened noticeably as he gazed intently into the deep blue of her now serious eyes.

"You have pleased me by words for the first time," he admitted and after a pause added: "But it will be impossible for us to ever meet again after you fly away tomorrow."

"Why?" she asked with some show of alarm.

"Because I'm not going to take any chances on giving mankind the benefit of my genius, and, I'd have to earn a living if I took a wife," was his answer.

"You misconstrued my words," she asserted as a blush mounted her cheeks. "I—I—didn't mean we should wed when we meet again."

"Well, that's what the natural sequence of events means and the only way I could support anyone would be through my inventions, which I swear I shall never sell to anyone," he persisted.

"But don't you think you will eventually get over this malice you feel towards your fellow-men?" she asked.

"Never!" he thundered.

"Why not? Haven't other deserving aspirants overcome their bitterness after repeated defeats? Can't you? And don't you know you will triumph gloriously with these wonderful ideas of yours? Don't you—"

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"I will not be reasoned with or argued out of my justifiable purpose," he interrupted with a forbidding wave of both hands.

There was always something most decisive in this man's negations and he possessed an uncanny ability for stifling enthusiasm. He had no doubt acquired this through protracted choking of his own aspirations. Gwen Dale knew any further efforts to drive home arguments at this juncture would be fruitless and luckily she conceived another notion.

"Very well," she finally said submissively. "Now if you'll show me where your larder and cooking outfit are, I'll prepare breakfast."

"I can do that better than you can," he snapped as he arose to his feet dusting the seat of his trousers.

"Oh I don't know," she replied confidently as she arose dusting herself in a spirit of mischievous imitation. "All the folks at home say I'm some cook. I'd love to hear your opinion."

Hope reflected for a moment and, then, without uttering another sound, led the way into the hut. Crossing to a lever attached to the wall opposite to the bunk, he hesitated as if in doubt.

"Go ahead, be game," the girl urged. "One meal, even badly cooked, wouldn't kill you."

After rubbing his hands together briskly for thirty

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seconds, which seemed like ten minutes to the curious and interested girl, he pulled the lever down and a sliding door opened revealing a unique kitchenette of immaculate white. In her unrestrained surprise Gwen rushed right into the room ahead of the man.

"Isn't this gorgeously cute!" she exclaimed. "And to think it is one man's work accomplished independent of anyone else's aid, and so far away from civilization! Oh, I love this!"

The typically feminine ecstasy of the girl proved to be contagious to the extent of making Hope smile half in pride and half in pleasure over the impromptu compliment which had been paid him for his good taste. The smile was still on his face as he crossed to press two buttons in rapid succession. A panel in the wall slid open and revealed a large pantry filled with all kinds of canned edibles and several baskets of fresh vegetables and fruits.

"There," he said. "Get up the menu to suit yourself. Here's the stove already hot."

He indicated a large steel plate on one end of which was attached an oven.

"How perfectly dandy," the girl enthused as she crossed to the stove and held her hand over it. An expression of perplexity spread over her face as she failed to locate the source of the heat. When she looked ask-

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ance at her host he said simply :

"Electric."

"What complete ingenuity," was her admiring comment.

"It's quite simple," he replied modestly. "But go ahead with your breakfast. I will be back in ten minutes."

Gwen was positively happy in that kitchenette. She enjoyed every second of the work of preparing the breakfast, which consisted of most everything on a complete menu excepting dairy products.

When Hope returned he was visibly pleased with the attractive way in which the girl had decorated and set the table, and when he ate the food he mentally confessed it tasted better than any meal he had ever cooked. The grace and efficiency with which she waited on him made a favorable impression, too. It was so home-like and her companionship was, after all, most congenial.

"Is everything all right?" she inquired as she noted how heartily he ate.

"First-class, but you're still doomed to disappointment if my deductions concerning your thoughts are correct," he replied without looking up from his plate.

"Oh cheer up, Mister Man, you might be doomed to some pleasant surprises yet," she retorted good-naturedly.

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"No," he fairly expostulated. "And please don't persist in being optimistic in my presence."

Thus was the girl once more forestalled in her valiant attempt to force some sunshine into this gloomy pessimist's life.

Immediately upon finishing he shoved his chair back and arose, announcing in the most matter-of-fact way imaginable, that he expected to be occupied all morning in working on her seaplane preparatory to her flight homeward, and, without even waiting for her answer he walked out of the hut as if he were in a hurry.

"Well, I'll be hanged, if he isn't the queerest man I ever met," she ejaculated. "What a fussing good time his wife is going to have with him for abrupt stunts like that!"

However, despite these sentiments the girl derived real pleasure from the tasks of cleaning up the breakfast dishes and tidying up the place in general. It was not until she had completed all the jobs she could find to do that she thought much of the curious case her host presented, due to his extraordinary views and obstinacy. She was sure of a most unhappy existence back in New York City if she went away from him with no better understanding than she had thus far achieved. In fact, she felt she could not bear to leave him permanently to his sad ruminations and excessive sufferings of defeat.

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She must go and do his bidding faithfully by singing his praises without stint and then she must see him again to report the results! All this seemed unalterably patent to her. Why? Well, she scarcely knew for certain. Anyway acting solely upon impulse she suddenly ran out of the hut and to her seaplane on the beach.

There he was working away with truly prodigious energy on the engine. Upon discovering her presence he gave her one fleeting glance and remarked casually:

"It's not near as good an engine as you'd think they'd be able to make after all their experiences."

"Why, that's a Rolls-Royce and it's supposed to be the acme of perfection," she replied.

"Just the same it is full of defects with all due respect to the Rolls-Royce idea, which within itself is pretty good," he contended. "However, when I get through you'll have a plane that'll take you across the Atlantic and back again without any trouble." Then he paused to gaze steadily into her eyes for a moment, after which he continued: "This much I'm doing for you in spite of my determination to exclude man from my realm of usefulness. With my aid you will be able to realize your ambition to be the first woman to navigate all the kinds of air this great ocean can have. I've no doubt but what the so-called experts will examine this machine and copy its improvements, but I'm satisfied in

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the knowledge that these aeronautical devices are my least important inventions, and anyway, I want to make you feel indebted to me."

"And why do you want me indebted to you if we're never going to meet again?" she asked.

"So you'll do your bit to help me gain revenge by telling the world what it has missed by side-tracking me so heartlessly," he announced with pronounced emphasis on every word.

"I'll do all I can—"

"Good!"

"But on one condition—"

"Absolutely not—no conditions."

"Yes!" And Gwen Dale was never so firmly determined in all her young life.

"Yes? You still want to argue with me after I have told you it's no use?" he demanded considerably surprised.

"Yes, I want to argue with you all the rest of the minutes I'm here if necessary to make you see the mistake you are making in exiling your wonderful self," she announced without flinching.

Given C. Hope looked at Gwen Dale as he had never looked at a girl before. The very expression in his eyes betrayed his realization of facing a really unusual member of the gentler sex, one in whom most any

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man could repose unlimited confidence. He was compelled to admire her courage in standing ground she could not possibly tread upon the minute he willed to the contrary. He knew he was master of the situation if he chose to be. He could even prevent her from ever returning to civilization again if he wished to go to extremes, and, there was no one to check him! He knew the girl knew this, and therefore he admired her all the more for her unshakeable bravery. How could he resist her? Easily, could Given C. Hope, so obsessed was he by the spirit of making man remorseful for all the vicissitudes he had endured.

"You're going to fail, girlie, just as I have failed in the years gone by," he finally replied, at once resuming his work.

"No, no, no," fairly screamed the girl. "This is an injustice I will not see done. I—"

"Brave words and I admire your determination, but all Hell can't change me now, it's too late," he interrupted.

"All Hell may not be able to change you, but I will!" she hurled back at him defiantly.

"I'm sorry, Miss, but you won't," he denied firmly.

"Then I won't fly back to America at all."

"You will leave here before sunrise tomorrow."

"I won't."

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"I refuse to argue further with you."

"Oh, pshaw, that's the goal we always reach; let's sprint for somewhere else." And now the girl's attitude was one of challenge.

"Now I'm going to tell you something confidential," he interposed, discontinuing his work again.

"I shall be glad to hear all of that you've got to hand out," she proclaimed with an air of entreaty combined with a I-think-it's-about-time spirit.

"Fine!" he replied. "I was married once and I never got a divorce."

Gwen's eyes blinked once more, and, she pondered for just a few seconds. Then she retorted significantly:

"Well, the divorce courts are still open to all comers if there's any excuse for coming to them."

Hope straightened up and eyed the girl narrowly.

"Say, you are bent on romancing, aren't you?" he murmured in low, ridiculing tones.

"No, emphatically no, but I think you're much too nice a fellow to rot away in oblivion," she replied.

"You're the first one to ever make known such a viewpoint to me, and, unfortunately, you do not run the world or its inhabitants to suit yourself," was his answer.

"Well, I can go a long ways towards changing a large portion of the world and you'd better give in a few points to me if you really want to get revenge," she quick-

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ly retaliated with the air of one determined to threaten at any cost.

"I'll get all the revenge I want with or without your aid, but I'm sincere in my appeals for your help."

"I've given you my word of honor that I'll exploit you all I can, but I want to do more—I want to extricate you from this entanglement of stubborn despair and reckless resignation to a tragic fate."

This was indeed a laudable friendship for a girl, who was really a stranger, to offer, and, Hope was suddenly controlled by an irresistible sense of appreciation.

"I would be a miserable ingrate if I did not thank you for your fine spirit," he said. "I will be frank enough to say that if I had not experienced such positive proof of the impossibility of my fitting into man's social and economic systems successfully, and if I had not been dealt such terrific blows in my matrimonial venture, I would listen to you and I would probably follow you as a worshipper. As it stands, it's all too late—my heart is too seared and my soul is too deadened to ever accomplish a regeneration. I'm sorry, but my mind is made up."

It is pretty difficult to persuade a man who is in such a groove. Gwen Dale was not equal to the occasion. She had never before encountered such an invulnerable wall of resistance. She could not understand why any mortal could be so determined to abandon the

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good things of life only because they did not come soon enough. She failed to understand this man's mental attitude just as society cannot fathom the workings of a mind bent on self-destruction disregarding all exhortations to reconsider. She was perceptibly discouraged and was suddenly enveloped in an apparent sadness. She was, of course, unaware of the fact that Hope had never been married, and was only resorting to prevarication to discourage, and, as he calculated, to save her.

Wisely he continued his work on the machine without looking to see the effect of his words upon the girl. She gazed long and wistfully into blank space before she could summon enough power to speak again and when she did propound a rather off-hand question as to what became of his wife, her voice was husky.

"Or do you care to talk about her?" she supplemented.

He diverted his attention from his work long enough to say:

"I married the wrong woman. Men generally do. After she had ruined me, she went away with another man under disgraceful circumstances. Women can always get sympathy and consolation you know. She so completely destroyed my confidence in people who make solemn vows that I would never reconcile myself to trusting anyone again. Meanwhile, I was always able

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to accomplish such useful feats as you have seen here, but I never had any source of incentive. In fact, when I saw I could never gain even a start through my best ideas and when I got thoroughly acquainted with men's strong tendencies to steal and profit by it, while I suffered the agonies—mind you, the agonies—of working hard to no good end, I gave up once for all."

"Then you don't love this woman any more?"

"Certainly not—I abhor the memory of her."

"And you could never love another?"

"Yes, I could really love for the first time," and he smiled at his own capacity for deceiving.

"You could?" Wherewith Gwen turned her gaze to the confessor.

"Yes, I could love you," he admitted.

"Then why don't you?" she almost demanded.

"Because it would ruin you and it would ruin me," he declared impressively. Then he climbed down off the seaplane and walked over to the girl. "You see if I weakened now for selfish reasons, I would go back to civilization and perhaps become successful. I don't want to do that."

"Why not?" she asked, still puzzled.

"Because I can serve a better purpose my unhappier way."

"I fail to see how."

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"Could not I teach this and future generations to not ignore the unknown would-do-well so generally by making myself a martyr to the cause?"

"A martyr to the cause!" she gasped in renewed alarm. "You mean—"

"I mean I would gladly die to spare contemporary strugglers and those unborn," he affirmed smilingly.

And that smile was the manliest smile Gwen Dale ever saw, she thought. This man was the most remarkable hero she had heard about, she was sure. He would die that laudable and lofty aspirations might survive. The world had long since become too greedy and unfair. Monopolists in every walk of life did keep the door of opportunity as slightly ajar as they could. It was difficult to get a start in doing big things without influence. Never before did this girl realize these incontrovertible facts as she did now. She was familiar with a shining example wherein the system of developing new talent was wrong. She also recalled how even her own father and mother laughed scornfully when she announced an ambition to become an aviatrix in order that she might do her share towards conquering the air for the benefit of man and science. She could at last see clearly the unpardonable sin which had been committed against this genius simply because he was in oblivion and meek about it.

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Given C. Hope studied her intently all the time she was silently contemplating these facts.

"May I ask what is the matter?" he finally asked gently.

"Oh! Oh! You are winning me over to your viewpoint," she moaned ruefully.

"I'm sincerely glad."

"I'm sorry," she replied.

"Of course, now, but later you will be glad," he assured her.

"I doubt it, but I cannot stoop to begging a man to abandon a wonderful heroism for my sake," she replied. "I did not know I was trying to persuade the strongest man I ever knew to become a weakling just for worldly reasons. I will fly away tomorrow hoping against hope that I will do exactly as you wish."

"Hoping against hope," he repeated after her thoughtfully.

"Yes," she whispered.

He drew closer to her and took her hand.

"Don't hope against Hope," he beseeched.

"I'm afraid I can't help it," she demurred.

"Yes you can when I tell you one more secret. That is my name, Hope—Given C. Hope."

"It is!" she exclaimed.

"Yes and the first necessity for my telling you

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seemed to come into being when you said you would hope against hope. I want you to hope for me."

"I—I will," she promised. "I'll pray for you. Oh God!"

And poor, distracted, little Gwen Dale fell in a limp heap into Hope's strong arms.

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CHAPTER VII.

BEFORE SUNRISE.

JUST at the break of the next morning Gwen Dale was awakened by the sound of the motor on her seaplane. She lost little time in donning her clothes and getting out of the hut. Upon reaching the beach she was surprised to find Given C. Hope on top of the upper wing energetically wielding a hammer while the propeller was going full speed without scarcely making the machine tremble.

"Well," she exclaimed jovially. "Where there's work, there's Hope."

The din of the engine precluded the possibility of hearing so soft and sweet a voice, but Hope espied the girl the moment she arrived, and he smiled his greeting. A moment later he discontinued his hammering, climbed down to the fuselage and, after stopping the motor, leaped out, landing firmly on the sand.

"She's tuned up great and I know you'll fly back to New York with ease," he assured.

"And, you're still determined that I shall go today?" she asked eagerly.

"Yes, before the sun comes up," he declared emphatically.

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"What if I refuse to fly?" she ventured much inclined to temporize.

"Then I will find a way to force you to obey me," he replied grimly.

"All right, but suppose I do go, can't I come back if I want to?" she persisted.

"You or no one else shall ever set foot on this island again if I have the power to prevent."

"But maybe you might get sick and need someone to care for you," she suggested with obvious concern.

"The God in the Heaven will take care of me and I place my whole trust in Him alone." Hope uttered these words in a tone of voice which was convincing of his deep faith in his religion.

"I'm glad to hear you say that, for it proves you have not lost all your faith in everything," she said, assuming a more serious attitude.

"I still believe in the Supreme Being and I know He has proven His love for me," the earnest man affirmed. "I'm striving with all my might to be worthy of an exalted eternity. It is for this reason I tried to avoid you entirely when you first landed."

"But why pick on me?" she asked feigning pique.

"I'm not picking on you, but when you came I feared I might do what I always swore I would do if any human being ever intruded upon my seclusion," he re-

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plied.

"Kill?" she asked becoming suddenly excited.

"Yes, and I went into the hut while you slept the first night feeling I would not be satisfied if I let you survive," he announced half in shame.

"Oh don't tell me that you would have murdered me," she begged.

"Yes, I would have ——"

"Then what stopped you?"

"Your innocent beauty," he confessed.

"Thank goodness you thought that," she replied. "I was almost sure I half realized you came into the hut that night."

"Please let me forget it all now, because I'm sorry I ever even started to do such a wicked act, and I thank God I didn't carry it out," and the man started to walk away.

Gwen followed him and placed her hand lightly upon his arm.

"Don't go away from me for a single second," she begged. "It seems I'm destined to do enough going away for both of us."

"You shouldn't mind that."

"But I do very much and I'm determined to tell you why," she replied.

"You must not tell me anything excepting you're

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going away to stay away, and that after you've done all you can to tell the world what it has missed by shoving me aside, you will forget all about me," he decreed.

"But it will be impossible to forget you," she insisted.

"Perhaps, but it will not be impossible for you to remain in your own sphere and stay out of mine," he retorted.

"What harm would a little social visit either way do once in a while?" she demanded.

"So much harm that I tell you for the last time, you shall never land on this island again. I'm positively through with human beings and that includes you as nice as you are. Remember, I don't want you to come back and I don't want you to tell anyone where this haven of mine is located. If you do—well, no mortal will ever succeed in making a landing here. I am going to live and die alone with my secrets. I am bound to teach humanity a lesson which I trust will obliterate the common tendency of making ambition a veritable farce."

There was such a tremendous note of sincerity in the man's manner of delivering this ultimatum, and there was such a pronounced expression of dogged determination upon his face with its immutable lines of forcefulness that the girl forthwith decided she was only wasting time in undertaking to dissuade him in the least. She

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realized more keenly than ever he was quite unlike any other man she had ever met in that he was unalterably immune to all the wiles of woman nor could he be reasoned with for a moment. She winced when she thought of what a terribly lonely existence he was bent on consigning himself to for the sake of gaining world-wide attention as a sad product of the whole system of human ways. He seemed to read her mind at this juncture, for he added:

"You see, in order to be regarded as really human one has to be decidedly inhuman. I'm only taking the one recourse left open to me, by conditions over which I never had any control, for, naturally, if I had controlled, I would have been today one of the world's most acclaimed inventors. So, I'm being inhuman because it is the only way to appear human to a human."

"Its too complex for me to understand it," she replied, "but I cannot see why you should be permanently beyond the influence of reconciliation."

"The best way for me to answer that is by suggesting a test. Shall I?"

"Sure, I want to be shown," she agreed.

"Fine! Already there is a great deal of speculation over that wild message of mine, telling about your being stalled mid-air—"

"Oh mercy, I had most forgotten that," she inter-

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rupted, taking on a worried expression. "How will I ever explain that?"

"You don't need to explain it; you can demonstrate it," he remarked as coolly as if he were merely discussing the weather.

"I can demonstrate it!" she repeated, after him with much dubiousness.

"Yes, before landing at Mineola you can circle the whole city of New York and make them all gasp by stopping dead still at any height you choose for a full five minutes," he announced with a confident smile in which could be discerned the triumphant.

"You don't mean——" she fairly gasped.

"I mean," he interrupted, "that you have a combination of automatic stabilizer and mechanical aerial anchorage on your machine now. It is not only a solution, but a perfection of a solution to the problem which has beset inventors from the day that the dangers of falling became apparent."

"You are really serious?" she inquired as doubt persisted to infest her mind.

"Yes, and you will be within an hour's time," he reassured her. "However, here's the test—stop mid-air for five minutes over the heart of New York City. Then when you finally alight, do a lot of bragging about the wonderful attachments on your plane, and if you

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don't get absolute evidence of not one but several men trying to unfairly deprive you of your rights to the mechanism, and within forty-eight hours, I am the biggest fool that ever lived. When you see for yourself how eager a lot of thieves of high social and business standing are to appropriate or steal what seems to be a good thing, you will very plainly understand why I cannot be reconciled. Why, if I could get back to America or to any other country with all of my inventions, I know I would not get more than one-thousandth of the credit due me, and I might continue my old-time luck which did not net me one iota."

"But, of course, you have not taken into consideration that possibly you were simply unluckier than others and—"

"Unluckier than others!" he exclaimed. "Why, there are millions of men and women, every one of them a true aspirant, who are much more luckless than I am." He paused a moment to let a smile play across his countenance and then he added with bitter irony: "I was very fortunate! Just see what wonderful things it brought me!"

Gwen blinked her eyes in renewed wonderment as she glanced around the barren island for one solitary thing to be thankful for. She shuddered. He noted the shudder and laughed loudly more in derision than

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in merriment.

* * * * *

The eastern skies were rapidly becoming brighter. Hope had just finished instructing Gwen how to operate the new attachments he had installed on her seaplane. All was in readiness for the flight which the plucky aviatrix was sure would be fateful. Inwardly she was somewhat of a fatalist and Hope's peculiar pessimism and undying chagrin had at last become sufficiently contagious to engulf all the inherent gay spirits she ever had. She was ostensibly worried, but in reality she was deep in mental anguish. Her very heart ached. It was to be the saddest leavetaking of her young, vivacious life.

She would have gladly remained on that dreary island indefinitely with this man who confessed having planned on murdering her. There was something magnetic, even hypnotic about him. In her estimation he was a great genius, worthy of unbounded admiration, and she did admire him almost excessively. She was telling herself especially this as she sat beside her new-found hero in the fuselage of her machine while he was making a final adjustment of a switch. Her steadfast gaze was upon his solemn face. She waited to say something to him, but she was at last too resigned to the inevitable to summon much courage and she knew it was certain he would promptly counter with a disheartening

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rebuff. Not once did this little Gwen think of the perils of the aerial voyage she was about to undertake alone. Her whole mind was concentrated upon irrepressible regret over the conditions under which she was soon to bid farewell to a man she would like to associate with more.

Hope sensed her sad ruminations and when he was finally satisfied that he had done all in his power to make her plane safe and secure, he met her gaze without flinching.

"Now you're ready to go—a God-speed," he said.

Her lips trembled and she could not utter a sound.

"Come, come, girlie, don't be a fool," he urged as he divined what this meant.

Her reply was only a steadier stare.

"Why don't you say something just for the sake of relieving the tension from which you are suffering?" he asked with a slight show of impatience.

Thereupon tears welled up in the girl's big blue soulful eyes.

"Please don't do that," he beseeched as he grappled with a rising sympathy.

All the words the poor girl wanted to say were choked off by her oncoming emotion, and in despair she covered her fair face with her hands and sobbed convulsively. Hope withstood this as long as he possibly

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could and then he weakened. Tenderly he slipped his arm around Gwen's slender waist and after hesitating momentarily he drew her closer to him.

"It is for your sake, little girl—I am saving you from a futile, unhappy life by sending you away forever," he whispered. "I could never love you or any other human being again, but I regard you as my only friend and—now—good-bye."

She pressed her face more firmly into her hands. He studied her for a moment. Then he gently pulled those white, shapely hands away and placing his own rough hand under her chin, raised her head until he forced her to look at him squarely in the eyes. A wan smile crept over her face and a love unmistakable gleamed out penetrating the man's big heart. Almost violently he pressed her to his bosom, kissing her fervently and she was supremely happy, but not so happy that she did not realize Given C. Hope's act of strong devotion belied his denials of fostering affection.

However, the joy was of a winged moment. Hope released the girl from his embrace abruptly and leaped out of the machine.

"Now go!" he shouted as soon as he got his footing on the sand.

"And come back?" she asked imploringly.

"No, never!" he yelled.

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"I will come back," she asserted emphatically.

"And if you do there will be naught but tragedy—we will both perish," he warned.

"Just the same I will not say good-bye," she replied boldly as she started her engine.

An instant later she released her anchor and the plane shot out to sea with a mighty roar. Never did an air-going craft rise more gracefully. Never did a pilot execute a more perfect circle prior to embarking on a flight.

Given C. Hope watched this wonderful transport of the girl he knew loved him until it passed beyond the range of his vision. Then most frantically he rushed to the cove where his boat was moored and began working upon it with desperate haste as if he were bent on putting to sea at the earliest moment!

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CHAPTER VIII.

SENSATIONS IN NEW YORK.

EXACTLY at four o'clock that afternoon a giant sea-plane descended straight down, right side up as an elevator, out of space twelve thousand feet above the earth's surface. When it ceased to descend it was only about two hundred feet above the roof-tops of the vicinity of Times Square, the busiest spot in New York City. At that low altitude the strange machine stopped dead still, hanging as gracefully mid-air as if it were a captive balloon. Thousands of people witnessed this unusual spectacle and never was gasping so general in this blase section of America's most cosmopolitan metropolis. Exclamations of surprise were shouted so loudly and there was such a scurrying for the most advantageous positions from which to get a good view of the plane that the crowded streets became a veritable bedlam of tense excitement.

"What is it?" was asked a hundred times a second.

"Who is it?" was asked even more frequently.

While most everyone was demanding in unrestrained awe:

"What does it mean?"

No one thought of automatic stability; no one dream-

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ed of such a thing as an aerial anchorage. It was either a miracle or a strange accident.

Then dozens of newspaper reporters got on the scene and they were naturally the first ones to remember the queer wireless announcing Gwen Dale's unbelievable predicament over the Azores. True, the whole press had ridiculed the idea of an aeroplane being stalled mid-air and had attributed the sending of the message to that effect to someone with a penchant for practical joking. Now quite unexpectedly a demonstration of the easy possibility of bringing about such a condition at will was being given and the rumor that it was Gwen Dale, the greatest American aviatrix, calmly resting high in the air over Manhattan, spread like wild-fire when once the newspaper men started it.

Two full minutes after the machine had become stationary, the head of a laughing girl was discovered looking down over the edge of the fuselage of the monster of the air. She waved her hand energetically whereupon a mighty cheer went up from thousands of throats. After the tumult died down the girl placed her hands to her mouth as a megaphone and shouted:

"Tell the world it's Gwen Dale in the greatest flying machine the world has ever seen—the invention of the greatest genius alive. He's in oblivion and his name is Given C. Hope."

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Many people in the upper stories of the higher buildings heard every word of this impromptu speech. Several reporters were among those who were able to get the statement down verbatim.

Exactly two minutes later the daring pilot waved a good-bye and the seaplane darted off towards Long Island, climbing steadily to a higher altitude. Not many minutes afterward she made a successful landing near Mineola and stood safely on terra firma surrounded by scores of amazed though congratulating people, who had suddenly appeared on the scene as if by magic.

"Bring the newspaper men to me as quickly as possible," the girl requested of military and naval officers of the aviation corps who had hastened to her side. "Arrange for giving me a private hangar for my plane too," she ordered in the next breath.

* * * * *

The clock was just striking seven when Gwen Dale walked into her Riverside Drive apartment. She was warmly greeted by her sturdy father and hysterically embraced by her overjoyed mother. It was like the resurrection of the dead for this aged couple, because they had hours before given up all hope of ever seeing their daughter again. The girl laughed at their words of apprehension.

"Why, you two dears, you shouldn't have worried

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a minute, because there never was a girl in safer hands and then in a safer machine than I was," she said reassuringly.

"But how did it ever all happen?" both parents asked simultaneously.

"Here, let's all read these and find out," she suggested as she yanked a bundle of newspapers from under her arm.

With almost breathless eagerness the parents read "the big story of the day," in which their daughter was the heroine. Every newspaper had featured the account extraordinary of her experiences far out over the Atlantic. Much space was devoted to the girl's statement relative to "the genius in oblivion" to whom she gave full credit for converting her seaplane into the marvel of the whole aeronautic age. When the father discovered the announcement of his daughter's intention to fly to Europe and back immediately, he almost swooned.

"No, no, Gwen dear, you mustn't ever attempt that hazardous trip again, you must not," he protested vigorously.

"Oh, but I must for the sake of science and—" She could not finish the sentence. Instead she suddenly burst into most violent weeping.

Completely overwhelmed by this sudden change of demeanor, both the father and mother placed their arms

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around the girl. The father was first to find his voice.

"Why, what's the matter?" he asked in utter bewilderment.

"Everything, everything," she cried. "Let me go to my room and be alone a while."

"It's her nerves gone to pieces," the mother divined. "She must have rest."

"Yes, yes, and weeks of it," the father agreed as he lifted his beloved offspring into his arms and carried her to her own room.

It required many minutes of earnest pleading on Gwen's part to persuade her parents to leave her alone in her room. They were extremely anxious over her condition, but finally decided it would be best to yield to her for the nonce.

"I shall change my clothes and join you very soon," she told them as they reluctantly departed.

"And I'll summon our physician; he'll quiet your nerves," the father replied.

"No, please don't call the doctor," the girl begged. "No doctor can do me any good. Anyway my trouble is not physical or mental and I can cure myself in my own way if you two good darlings will only not worry."

The father instinctively knew it would net him little to argue with his daughter, and, shaking his head dubiously, he escorted his good wife out of the room.

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Once alone Gwen sat down wearily in a large cushioned chair as she smothered an appeal to God for aid. Then for minutes she stared straight into the wall without realizing it was there. All she saw was the man of her heart on the lonely island away out at sea. All she could hear was his voice. His words kept reverberating in her whirling brain. His magnificent achievements recurred to her and her admiration for his genius grew manifold. Then when she recalled his declarations of determination to go through with his plans of making himself a martyr to the cause of humble aspiration, she shuddered. "Oh, if he could only reconcile himself to another attempt to realize his ambitions," she muttered. "He'd surely go down in history as the greatest inventor of all times." Then she recalled his story of how he had been ruthlessly crushed down during many years of assiduous effort to establish himself, and at first she could not understand how it had ever happened thus. However, quick as a flash it dawned upon her once more that after all she knew man's system of doing things almost totally lacked any semblance of altruism. "Ah, we do need more of the help-the-other-fellow spirit," she told herself. "There is too much grasping and grabbing, something a sensitive soul cannot endure and oh, how sensitive he is!"

Gwen would have probably continued her musing

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until midnight, but a gentle rap at the door aroused her.

"What is it?" she demanded as if vexed.

"There are several newspaper men here to see you, dear," her indulgent mother announced. "Shall I tell them you are too ill to talk to them?"

"No, tell them to be sure and wait," she replied. "I will be dressed and out there in less than ten minutes."

Only a definite incentive could make anyone accomplish a task as rapidly as Gwen Dale discarded her flying attire and donned a pretty, little pale blue silk dress, which accentuated her beauty. She rearranged her hair in less time than most men take to "find the part," and she powdered her whole face and neck in about two seconds. Thus it came about that she was presenting herself to ten gentlemen of the press in less than ten minutes.

"You are welcome, my dear sirs, and I have much to tell you in addition to what the evening papers had," she announced smilingly.

A rather tall and handsome young man stepped forward and warmly grasped her extended hand. Intelligence was written all over his smooth-shaven face and his amiable disposition shone forth like a bright star in the night. He smiled as he spoke in low, pleasing tones.

"Miss Dale, I am happy to congratulate you upon your remarkable achievements," he said, holding on to her

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hand. "I am also happy to inform you that I have the honor of being appointed spokesman for this group of rather distinguished gentlemen, for they are all special writers or editors of New York papers, while I happen to represent the Associated Press."

"Oh, the newspapers honor me by sending their best to cover this story," she replied with sincere gratification. "Shall I proceed to tell my story?"

"Surely and I trust you will not mind if I ask many questions as we go along," the spokesman answered.

"First, may I not know your name, sir?" she asked rather coquettishly.

"Most assuredly, I am Floyd Cooper Davis."

"A good American name and I am sure you will be in hearty sympathy with all the extremely unusual points I am about to bring up," she acknowledged.

"I shall be glad if I can serve you in any way," he assured graciously.

"Thank you. Now pray all be seated and pardon me for standing, because, frankly, I am bent on actually making a speech." She smiled gloriously as the gentlemen took seats. "My subject shall be," she continued thoughtfully, "Why Leave Genius in Oblivion?"

Expressions of surprise swept over the faces of those assembled around her.

"Yes, I know you expected the usual hair-raising

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account of a thrilling battle with the elements and all of that, but I had little of it. Instead I met upon an uncharted island the most remarkable man of his time, a man more remarkable than ever, due to the fact that he is a rank unknown."

Then the girl pictured in detail the night of revelations, explaining the wonderful inventions of the man she was so prone to laud without thought of what sort of a position it placed her in under the circumstances. Next she told of how the creator of these useful devices had been pushed aside during his struggles in the heart of civilization and she excoriated the conditions which made it so difficult for a lowly person to get a start in most any line of worth-while endeavor.

"Now I call this a shining demonstration of the criminal folly of not systematically allowing every aspirant to submit to a test which will scientifically determine his or her talent," she continued. "Given C. Hope was not only neglected to the extent of not being given even a mere chance, but he was scorned and rudely side-tracked every time he dared to enlist friends who would help to push him forward. Yet, some of the most useful devices now in vogue were based upon ideas he conceived, and he never received even a vote of thanks, let alone a decent living. And the most wonderful part of it all is, *his unpleasant experiences did not make a Social-*

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ist out of him. He was too practical to believe the principles of Socialism would help him any. He wanted no one to divide up their lot with him; he simply wanted to give the world all he had or could create for the honor there was in it and a fair pecuniary reward. But, try as he might, he could not get even this and in utter disgust, he set out on the high seas alone in a flimsy craft and landed on an uninhabited, little island, which surely cannot withstand the pounding of the mighty breakers any too long.

"In conclusion, I wish to announce publicly that I intend to fly back to that island with proper escort to attempt to induce Mr. Hope to return to us and prove the grounds for my enthusiastic faith in his ability. I also wish to publicly scold all mortals who overlook the duty of doing a bit towards exploring the untraversed regions for new talent. Every man and woman owe it to humanity in general to help the other fellow for the sake of making helpfulness a universally accessible influence for good, for the uplift. Let there be more of the altruistic ideal and the best men in every line of work will not live and die in obscurity."

There was not the least doubt as to the deep impression Gwen Dale's impassioned words made upon her auditors. Even the affable, never-ill-at-ease spokesman was speechless for a full minute after she finished. Her

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sweet smile encouraged him to rally and he arose abruptly, crossing to her all enthusiasm.

"I see it all, Miss Dale," he declared. "I see in this a most useful object lesson for all peoples. I can readily understand man-made fate can consign untold thousands of deserving aspirants to the scrap-heap of human derelicts. I—I—am anxious to do my utmost to drive home this tremendous point in question. I would even be wildly elated if it could be possible for me to be among those who will accompany you on your return flight to the little land of this rare genius."

"It can be arranged and I shall have it arranged, for I want the press represented," she promptly accepted.

"Great!" he exclaimed. "It is the very adventure I have always longed for. Meanwhile, we shall see to it that the engrossing story of Given C. Hope gains the widest possible circulation."

"I am very grateful to you, and, oh yes, he suggested a test of man's fairness, a test—oh goodness—I had most forgotten it—I must hurry to Mineola without a moment's delay."

"Oh my dear!" interjected Gwen's mother, coming forward from an obscure corner where she had unostentatiously sat throughout the interview. "You must not go down there tonight."

"Mother, I hate to disregard your wishes, but some-

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thing very important calls me to my hangar at once," the girl explained, trying to show tolerance.

"Possibly I could go for you," Davis suggested.

"No, it is something requiring my personal attention," she replied.

"It has to do with a test?" he queried.

"Yes, and some way I just feel it in my bones that I'll discover something sensational if I can only get to my machine in time."

"More news?"

"Yes, perhaps."

"Then wouldn't it be entirely proper for me to accompany you?"

Davis' manner was so genteel and he made suggestions with such admirable restraint that he won the confidence of not only Gwen but her mother as well.

"I guess mother would have no objections to my accepting the offer of such a distinguished gentleman," the girl said looking at her mother.

"No, dear, if you feel you must go, I would be less worried if Mr. Davis escorted you," was the maternal response.

"I really must go and with all possible speed," Gwen reiterated as she turned to hasten out of the room for her hat.

"If you'll direct me to the 'phone, I'll call a taxi-

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cab," Davis told the mother.

* * * * *

It was nearly midnight when Gwen and Davis stepped out of the taxicab a short distance from the hangar in which her seaplane was stored. After instructing the driver to await them there, they cautiously made their way through an adjoining open field. Gwen had told Davis of her suspicions based on Hope's prediction of unfairness within forty-eight hours after her landing. She also explained how an uncontrollable notion fairly dragged her to her precious machine.

They had not advanced more than two hundred yards when Gwen sighted her hangar.

"Oh see, there's a light in the building," she whispered excitedly.

"Isn't that to be expected?" Davis asked.

"Not at all," she declared. "We must some way get up to the building and see what's going on without being discovered."

This was not to be easily accomplished, as there were guards everywhere about the place.

"The safest plan is to crawl along, staying close to the ground," the girl suggested.

"I fear even that plan is not sufficiently safe for you," Davis replied. "Suppose you wait in the taxi while I do the detective work alone—"

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"No, I'm not such a molly-coddle," she refused resentfully as she crawled forward nimbly.

"You are admirably courageous and determined," he observed as he struggled to keep apace with the fair and fearless leader.

A moment later a stern male voice in the rear yelled: "Halt!" The crawling girl and man dropped instinctively on their stomachs and laid perfectly motionless. Davis heard a crackling of broken sticks immediately behind him and he turned his head in time to see the crouching form of a uniformed man picking his way toward him with a drawn revolver. It was no time for inactivity nor was it advisable to issue a challenge, so Davis wisely resorted to frankness, couched in suave diplomatic terms.

"We surrender, sir," he called in subdued tones.

"Up on your feet and up with your hands or get a shot," ordered the voice in the dark.

Davis promptly obeyed, and, upon noting that his companion failed to comply, he whispered distinctly:

"Obey, Miss Dale."

"Miss Dale!" the voice of the officer exclaimed.
"Gwen Dale, the aviatrix?"

"Yes," admitted the girl as she arose quickly to her feet, "and I'm here on a very important mission requiring absolute secrecy. Can we count on you, sir, as a

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friend in the name of justice?"

The officer advanced close to Gwen and peered into her face, at once recognizing her.

"Well, I'll be damned," he ejaculated. "What's up?"

"Help us to get a peep into my hangar without anyone getting onto our presence and I may tell you what's up," she proposed.

"Don't you trust those mechanics?" the officer asked.

"What mechanics?" she demanded.

"The fellows who are working on your machine," he explained.

"There you are!" the girl exclaimed. "I knew something was wrong. I ordered that my plane be left alone until I returned tomorrow. No human being has the least right to go near it without my consent and I have given no one such consent."

"Then I would suggest that we lose no time in getting a squint into that hangar," Davis urged as he took the leadership in advancing.

"Go ahead and I'll keep in the background to stall off other guards," the officer assented.

Thus did the couple have good fortune in promptly reaching a small window through which they could see everything and everyone inside the hangar. What did they see? A complete vindication of Given C. Hope's

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pessimistic estimation of man's scruples was being feverishly enacted by no less than a dozen men assembled around and on Gwen Dale's seaplane.

There was a very indignant and angry expression on her face as she took a calm survey of the men and their obviously unfair activities. One man whom she recognized as a well-known aeronautical engineer was sitting in her seat engrossed in jotting down notes. She actually gasped when she espied an inventor who had once proposed marriage to her. He was studiously examining a set of curious flappers on one of the wings. He was plainly puzzled. He could not figure out their usefulness. Another man whom Gwen knew well—a pioneer among dare-devil flyers—was carefully measuring the "ground anchor," which Hope had attached to the main structure of the airship. Three other men, none of whom she knew, had their heads together in earnest conference. The most loquacious of this trio kept pointing to a chain of weights extending from behind the propeller to the top of one of the pontoons. Still another notable in aeroplane construction was examining some blue-print plans he held in his left hand while his nervous right hand kept ploughing through his long, sandy hair.

"What do you think of this?" the girl finally asked Davis who saw and understood all.

"I think it's a damnable outrage being perpetrated

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by a bunch of crooks every one of whom I'll go in there and lick soundly if such procedure will not spoil any of your plans," was his inspiring response.

"Bravo!" she whispered enthusiastically. "But I think the tongue-lashing I plan will suffice for such cowardly cheats." She paused to take another glance inside and then continued: "And do you know that I recognize most of those men as prominent and honored members of the highest aeronautic circles?"

"I know two of them myself," Davis replied.

"And they are all deliberately trying to steal the valuable ideas of another man," she observed. "Is it any wonder Mr. Hope became disgusted and gave up if this is what he could not successfully combat?"

"Giving up would not have been my way," Davis declared rather bitterly. "I would have fought like an infuriated lion. No gentle-as-a-lamb tactics will do in this world of strife. Let me go ahead in there and I'll show you what I mean."

Gwen could not suppress a chuckle. She liked the kind of virile spirit Davis was manifesting. She was not without fighting proclivities herself, and there was glory in waging most open warfare now.

"Gee, I'm glad you're with me on this occasion," she murmured as she squeezed her escort's arm. "I'll go in first and do my little act and you follow whenever you

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think it will be opportune."

"Good! Go ahead!" he urged as if anxious to get into action.

Without faltering the girl marched quite majestically into the hangar.

"Gentlemen?" she yelled very questioningly by way of announcing herself.

A panic was precipitated. Every man thus confronted had a guilty conscience and betrayed it. Not one of them had the least excuse to offer for being on the spot. Every cheater of them was amazed over the unexpected visit of the most talked-of girl in America, and every cheater feared her wrath. Nor did she keep them waiting long.

"You crooks of pretended respectability," she began. "You personification of the chief bane of this existence of ours! Thieves of the night and none of you stop your thieving in daylight hours either." She paused long enough to shake her finger accusingly at the startled group. "Now," she fairly yelled, "now I'm going to expose every one of you."

"Aw hell, choke her and throw her out," shouted one of the trio Gwen did not know.

Instantly Floyd Cooper Davis sprang to the girl's side and he, too, was recognized by most of the men present.

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"Let any one of you curs make a hostile move and I'll wallop the whole crowd of you," he warned.

Davis waited a moment for someone to make a move, but no one stirred.

"Now as a representative of the Associated Press, I want the name, occupation and address of every man here," he continued. "Out of a spirit of fairness I will permit each of you to make a statement as to what your motives are and who gave you authority to take liberties with this seaplane."

Oh, the squirming this caused! The only man who did not seem to be much ruffled was the one who suggested rough treatment for the girl. He turned a sweeping gaze on his fellow-culprits and demanded:

"Say, are we going to let this guy get away with this?"

No one answered promptly, but Davis was punctual in removing his coat. Then the inventor who had once professed an ardent love for the girl he was now taking advantage of intercepted:

"I would advise most humble apologies and an immediate withdrawal," he said.

"I should think you would," Gwen Dale retorted derisively.

The one thus addressed simply hung his head low and started to make his exit.

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"Your name, sir," commanded Davis leaping in his pathway.

"Oh, I know him and all the others excepting the would-be fighter and his two pals," Gwen reassured.

"Then they're the ones I'll go after," the dauntless journalist announced as he walked straight over to the outspoken malcontent.

"Come on here and talk fast," he ordered as he grabbed this stranger by the shoulder.

"I'll bust you in the fact if—" but the ruffian had no chance to finish the threat, because Davis quickly landed a punch which sent the fellow sprawling into a pool of oil.

With rare agility Davis turned on the other two, but they fled. Indeed every man there took advantage of the skirmish to the extent of fleeing—all excepting the vanquished one, and he was too dazed.

Gwen laughed scornfully as she stood by watching the mad exodus. Davis was unmistakably chagrined when he realized all except one had escaped. He was boiling over with desire to fight. As a foiled beast often does, he returned to the small part of the prey he had been able to capture. He found his victim struggling to get out of the slimy oil and onto his feet.

"Get up, you dog, and go to jail," Davis growled.

"I won't," the other snapped back.

"Oh yes you will, that's what I'm here for," put in

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the officer who promptly laid strong hands on the unruly one.

* * * * *

Despite many powerful influences from high sources the Associated Press accepted the sensational exposure supplied by Davis, and the next morning newspapers everywhere were filled with the news of unscrupulous attempts to purloin the secrets belonging ostensibly to Gwen Dale. Several arrests and criminal suits fanned the flame of public indignation, and all the sympathy went to the woman in the case. Editorially various newspapers denounced the most prominent of the guilty men. Furthermore an authorized statement from Miss Dale was printed throughout the country. This statement set forth the true facts of how Given C. Hope had proposed a test and of how it developed he knew from experience what would happen.

The most vital upshot of it all was that the series of unprecedented sensations, as cleverly managed by the faithful Gwen, made a veritable hero out of a genius in oblivion! This interest was heightened by the definite announcement that the daring aviatrix was going to fly back to that island for the purpose of persuading this genius to return to civilization. And no one doubted her ability to succeed. Forsooth, one high city official of New York immediately started the ball to rolling towards mak-

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ing plans for a great public reception for the conqueror from Unknown Land.

* * * * *

Then came the night the one week later—the night Hope had promised to again project his long-distance illuminated sign. Gwen had looked forward to this as the occasion on which she could give even a more thrilling proof of the matchless ability of the man she was representing to the world as the premier inventor of all time. She prepared elaborately to make the utmost out of the impression she was sure would be created by others seeing the very words she had predicted in the heavens above Gotham. At least twenty newspaper men, including Floyd Cooper Davis, were among her guests on the roof of the apartment house in which she resided, and from the inception all eyes were kept busy scanning the sky.

“What’ll you do if this thing fails to materialize, Miss Dale,” ventured one of the more skeptical reporters.

“I’ll say something went wrong through no fault of Mr. Hope,” she promptly replied.

“But, don’t you think it will be difficult to convince the very wise public,” he persisted.

“I’m not going to worry seriously over convincing any part of the so-called very wise public,” she retaliated.

“I’d think you would feel your responsibility in this

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affair more than that," he shot back at her, smiling dubiously.

Gwen was unmistakably angered over this manifestation of skepticism, but instead of giving vent to her feelings, she simply bit her lips. She knew full well it would only be a futile argument after all. Then Davis came to the rescue.

"I fail to see any cause for doubt even though there may be failure tonight," he intercepted. "Has not even our own honored Thomas A. Edison had many failures? Was he any the less great for the set-backs since he was so capable of eclipsing them with remarkable triumphs?"

"Yes, but according to all the evidence in the case this fellow Hope is not a Thomas A. Edison," the skeptic pointed out.

"Comparisons are always odious to me and likewise skepticism," Davis retorted.

This sort of pro-and-con conversation was kept going throughout the whole evening up to midnight. As sleepiness and fatigue became more general, the skeptic gained converts. He seemed more admirably practical while Gwen Dale seemed more wildly illusory. She had erred to the extent of permitting her enthusiasm to fairly run away with her. She realized this, and it caused her to become most obviously anxious in her watchful waiting. Previously she had not taken into account the

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possibility of even a wizard falling short of his mark occasionally; now she began feeling that perchance Hope had not lost any of his vulnerability to ill-luck.

At any rate when two o'clock in the morning came most of her guests had given up the vigil and departed with more or less politeness intermingled with pity. By 3.30 o'clock all had gone excepting Davis and her own father and mother. They resolved to stay as long as Gwen decreed and she decreed patience until the sun was rising.

"Well, my dear Miss Dale, it is little to worry over, because he certainly did do wonders with your seaplane," Davis offered by way of magnanimous consolation as he prepared to go.

"You are very kind, indeed; out of twenty or more you are the only one to even consider me," she returned gratefully.

"It isn't so much that as it is my agreeing with you that just such skepticism as we have seen demonstrated tonight is the very hoodoo which so many perfectly talented people cannot overcome," he reminded. "Personally, I am convinced Mr. Hope, like many another rare genius, is ruthlessly crushed under the heel of an oppressive doubting Thomas as exemplified by humanity's attitude and his few failures are bound to be used to relegate his accomplishments to the background

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by the majority who seem determined to minimize great work when it comes from someone they do not know."

Gwen was sincerely glad to hear these words from a real man of achievement. She was all the more appreciative since she realized most of those reporters who had lost their time on her roof would be likely to take advantage of the opportunity to poke fun at her, and to make her appear as a deluded sentimentalist.

The most of them did exactly this. One newspaper even used the headline, "Wild Dream of Aviatrix Fails to Materialize as Was Inevitable." Another well-known paper started its account of what it termed "a monumental watch party," with the following sentence: "Gwen Dale, the plucky aviatrix, may be able to stick dead still high in the air, but she failed to make stick her story of the ability of a queer man to throw an illuminated sign some several hundred miles, and of course it was a ridiculous expectation after all."

Needless to add the girl was made all the more determined to vindicate herself, and she was all the more resolved to fly back to that island to persuade the man she had eulogized with so much abandon to return and make the whole world see his worth.

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CHAPTER IX.

WHEREIN VICTORY AND DEFEAT MINGLE.

A WHOLE week had passed by all too slowly for Gwen Dale, who was uncontrollably eager to hop off on another aerial voyage seaward. True, she had been extremely busy making arrangements for her next flight, and the filing of charges against those whom she resolutely prosecuted for daring to impose upon Given C. Hope's helpfulness required many hours of her time. Besides she had rushed through the preliminaries of applying for letters of patents, in the inventor's name, on the attachments which made her seaplane the marvel of the age. She overlooked no detail which would be in his interest, and she was determined to be the agency through which he could be induced to return to the haunts of men to look after his interests. Yes, she remembered Hope's dire threats, but she would over-ride his objections. She would swoop down upon his lonely retreat while he slept and she would simply force him to come back and fight victoriously.

Was there ever such a girl before? Yes, thousands of them when there was a deep love involved. Was there ever a more difficult task contemplated? Yes, thousands of them, but too generally people have lacked the un-

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swerving stamina requisite to achieving the accomplishment. Almost invariably success awaits any laudable and reasonable undertaking, but man's inherent skepticism leads him to falter and hide inert behind a screen of conservatism such as inspires following the line of least resistance, a policy oh so often a sheer, unvarnished fallacy.

Perhaps Gwen Dale would not be classified among the "regular human beings" by the average mind, because a person who will risk all for the thing he or she believes in is usually regarded as either a crank upon the subject involved or else there is a universal conviction of the presence of sorry insanity. Curiously enough, however, if it is a woman who stands out as the apostle extraordinary in any good cause, there is more sympathy than actual co-operation extended to her. A man—well, a man should be able to take care of himself and accomplish whatever he is capable of without the slightest assistance, either spiritual or material, according to the average thoughtless version. Still, no man was ever known to make noteworthy progress without the aid of a helping hand! A well-organized and consistently permanent system of exploring the untraversed regions of obscurity for new talent would enrich the glories of nations so prodigiously that a really idealistic age with propensities of a millennium could be counted as a possibility of the near future.

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A firm belief in the urgent advisability of not being supinely a tacit party to the colossal blunder of allowing the old adage: "To err is human," stand as an unassailable landmark of the mortal weaknesses, actuated Gwen Dale in her supreme efforts to make a most impressive example of the case of Given C. Hope. After all her love for the man was secondary, although none the less strong for its subjugation by a growing altruism.

And now at last came the hour for another adventure through peril-laden space. This time the daring aviatrix had two companions, Floyd Cooper Davis and a new mechanic, John West. Both were exceedingly formidable men for such a hazardous enterprise. Davis was a powerful athlete and a professional swimmer. West was one of the most efficient all-around mechanics in the aerial game. He was all the more valuable for his long experience as a navigator.

A great crowd had assembled to witness the thrilling departure. No event in the eventful battle to conquer the air could appeal more to the imagination. Sportsmen were even laying large bets on the outcome. Excitement ran at high tide and when Gwen finally appeared on the scene and walked briskly to her plane, a deafening ovation was accorded her. She acknowledged the honor gracefully. Davis and West followed close behind her, and they were received with enthusiasm, too.

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The trio climbed into their respective posts of duty quickly, and just five tense minutes were left for the crowd. Gwen had so calculated that she regarded it as indispensable to leave at precisely 4.30 P. M. She had astutely planned to reach the island at not later than three o'clock in the morning, when she figured Hope would be sleeping soundly and entirely off-guard. Hence she would tolerate no delays and she flew away right on schedule time. The start was made beautifully amid the roaring cheers of the thousands and until darkness had settled over the broad expanse of the Atlantic waters, it seemed to all on board more of a joy ride than a serious business.

At about nine o'clock the weather, that ever-fickle foe to man in all his ambitions, began playing pranks which were disconcerting. A rather high wind came up and as fate would have it, of course, it settled in no direction, being more of a twister than anything else. Soon this wind drove great dense clouds all around, obscuring the stars and at the same time the sea became dangerously choppy.

Up to this time Gwen and Davis had chatted gaily while West kept busy climbing daringly all over the machine watching every part.

"Now, Mr. Davis, I fear you will get plenty of the fighting you seem to love," the girl announced cheerfully as she settled down to efforts to battle against the rising

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fury of the elements.

"I'd enjoy it all immensely if it wasn't for the concern I feel for you," he replied. "However, pay no further attention to me until we get out of this storm. You have enough else to think about now."

For a full hour not another word was uttered on that soaring seabird. Then suddenly a flood of dazzling light enveloped the outfit.

"What's that?" Davis yelled in excitement.

"A searchlight," she answered. "But surely not his so soon."

West promptly got busy with his instruments. He tried to sight the sea in vain. The light vanished as abruptly as it came and there was pitch darkness.

"I'd advise you to drop a couple thousand feet so we can get our bearings," West shouted to Gwen.

She immediately turned the nose of her machine downward and descended the two thousand feet.

"That's enough—hold this altitude for a while," West yelled.

However, a ten-minute search failed to reveal the source of the brief shaft of light.

Gwen was perplexed. She figured she was at least five hundred miles away from Hope's island. It would not be possible for even him to throw such a light so far.

"It must be a ship," she shouted to West after a

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while.

"Nope, I don't think we're within one hundred miles of any ship right now," he answered.

"Then what was it?" she demanded.

"You've got me, Miss—it didn't seem to come from below anyway," was all the satisfaction the mechanician could give the pilot.

"I'd say it's strange," Davis commented a bit anxiously.

"Exceedingly so," she agreed. "I even imagine now that I could see ahead farther for the second we were in that light."

Davis shuffled his feet nervously and there was the shaft of light again!

In amazement he drew his feet in and leaned forward in the hopes of determining whence the truly terrific glare. Within the twinkling of that act the light disappeared again.

"Well, I'll be hanged," he ejaculated in amazement.

"Isn't it the limit!" she put in.

Both resigned to a period of watchful waiting and kept silent. Despite the grim necessity for concentration of all her thoughts on piloting the plane, Gwen fell to thinking about Hope's declaration that both would likely perish if she attempted to fly back to him. Then it struck her as more than passing strange she should think of that

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just at that moment. She pondered deeply. The thought of Hope's inventive skill flashed through her mind and she suddenly came to regard it as uncanny wizardry. Did he have anything to do with those two floods of light?

She meditated several minutes longer and then spoke:

"Mr. Davis."

"Yes," he responded with avidity.

"Look around and see if you can find any buttons or switches you hadn't noticed before," she requested.

Without making any response and seemingly understanding the girl's idea, Davis proceeded to make a careful examination of the whole interior of the fuselage. However, he could not discover any evidence of an attachment he was not familiar with, and he was just about to say so when for the third time a shaft of dazzling illumination flashed all around them for only an instant.

"It's coming from our own machine," West exclaimed while Gwen still blinked her eyes in consternation.

"I wouldn't be surprised," she declared as she became convinced that Hope had failed to apprise her of all the improvements he had installed. "See if you can find out what controls it."

West spent many minutes in going over all the plane at great risk, but he had to ultimately give up in despair.

"I guess I'm wrong," he announced.

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No sooner had he closed his lips than the fourth flash of light shot through the groaning winds. This time the rays did not linger for hardly more than a second, and it left Gwen Dale's nerves considerably unsteady. The stormy atmospheric conditions were enough to worry her, but this mysterious light was positively alarming. Indeed it impressed all three occupants of this speeding traveler of the night as ominous. Gwen felt a peculiar sense of distrust. She got to fretting about the way her engine was working, although West was entirely satisfied with it. Then she feared being far off her course, although West was positive they were going straight for the northern Irish coast.

Up until one o'clock in the morning the girl suffered painfully from her nerves. At that hour they suddenly flew into the most wonderful weather. The sky was ablaze with stars and the visibility was remarkable. They could see that the ocean below was so calm that it resembled a smooth sheet of glass.

"Oh what a relief," Gwen remarked as she sighed.

"You managed things great all through that storm belt," Davis complimented.

"Thank you. Even at that the storm wasn't so annoying as those flashes of light. I wonder why they discontinued."

"It may have been some kind of a phenomena," he

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suggested.

"Perhaps."

An hour later Gwen called West.

"We ought to be in sight of that island any minute now," she yelled.

West promptly turned all of his attention to trying to sight land. Three hours later he had still failed to find any indication of the close proximity of land. Gwen Dale was by now very much distressed. Things had been persistent in going wrong. But nevertheless she retained a certain amount of her determination.

"Well, I'll keep flying around in a circle because the island must lay within a hundred square miles hereabouts," she announced.

"If we waste more than another hour's supply of gas, we're liable to run out before we reach any European port," West informed.

Gwen took a chance and circled several times, but it was a futile perseverance. No land was sighted.

"We'll have to make for port now, Miss," West urged.

"Oh, but I can't give up," she remonstrated.

"I think it would be better to achieve the trans-Atlantic flight first and come back to search for the island in the daylight," Davis suggested.

"He's right, ma'm, he's right," West put in earnestly.

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"Very well then," Gwen replied wearily. "Here goes for a victory to off-set this defeat."

* * * * *

After thirty-six hours and forty minutes of continuous flying, Gwen Dale piloted her seaplane safely into Plymouth, England, at the break of day. Despite the early hour a large crowd had assembled to greet her. Six hours prior to this a liner had sighted the big ship of the air making good time with ease, and had sent a wireless to Plymouth announcing the fact. The news spread like wild-fire, the keenest of interest being aroused, because this was the first woman to attempt a transatlantic non-stop flight. Now in her moment of triumph, a resounding din filled the air. Whistles and bells combined to let the whole vicinity know something extraordinary had happened.

From the moment she set foot on British soil, Gwen was feted and idolized as the pluckiest girl of the age. The reception was enough to gratify the most blase person, and, outwardly she was very pleased, but inwardly she was sad and gloomy.

"This isn't what I want," she said in an undertone to Davis during a slight lull in the celebration. "I want to start back tomorrow if West can get the machine in shape."

"Pray forget that now," Davis urged. "First of all,

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you must have complete rest. Let us get away from this tumult as soon as possible."

By the time they did get to a hotel two hours had elapsed and Gwen's fatigue was so noticeable as to cause Davis much concern. While she was being escorted to her rooms, he, without consulting her, summoned a physician. Then he retired to the rooms assigned to West and him. Both men were sound asleep within a very short space of time.

Once in her rooms and alone, Gwen felt as if she wanted to bolt right out of them again. She had never been so lonesome before in her life. She could not bear the thought of going to bed. It seemed to her that she should be losing no minutes—Given C. Hope must be rescued now or never. In her estimation her great victory in crossing the Atlantic by air was overshadowed by her failure to find that island. Inevitably her thoughts reverted to those queer fleeting shafts of light which had nearly deprived her of her nerve. Could she have possibly been flying in circles right around Hope's observatory? Did her machine travel faster than the meter indicated? "There was something wrong in the calculations," she muttered.

While she was still trying to force her tired brain to solve these and other baffling problems, she was surprised to hear a firm rap on her door.

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"Who's there?" she yelled.

"Doctor Hope," promptly replied a masculine voice.

"Doctor Hope," she repeated as she dashed hurriedly to the door, which she opened with almost enough force to tear it off of its hinges. Then when she saw an elderly, white-haired gentleman, she calmed down and apologetically said: "Oh! I thought it was Given C. Hope."

"No, I am Doctor Lucian J. Hope," the man replied politely bowing. "I was asked to prescribe for you."

"Prescribe for me! For what?"

"For one thing—your nerves—as I can see already," the doctor answered.

"Do my nerves seem bad?" the girl asked.

"How could you expect them to be otherwise, my dear, after using them so continuously under such nerve-racking conditions?" he asked affably as he walked to a center table and deposited his medicine case there.

The doctor had no trouble in persuading Gwen to take some medicine. He ordered immediate rest and prepared some powders for her to swallow when she awakened. He felt her pulse and took her temperature. He listened to her heart and examined the pupils of her eyes.

"You're in mighty fine physical condition all things considered," he then told her as he prepared to go. "Now I beg of you to take a hot bath and jump right into bed."

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My congratulations and good-day."

So saying he crossed to the door. There he paused and took a quick glance at the girl.

"When did you last see Given C.?" he asked very gravely.

"What!" Gwen almost screamed.

"Never mind answering the question and pardon me," he hastened to say. "Good morning."

And before Gwen could recover from her surprise over the familiarity with which the doctor inquired after her genius in oblivion, he was gone.

"But I'll follow him right to his office and demand an explanation," she excitedly told herself as she began preparing herself to go out.

She had just put on her hat when there was a gentle rapping at her door. She lost no time in opening it and was confronted by a sweet-faced, buxom nurse.

"I'll stay with you and watch over you while you sleep," the nurse said smilingly.

"But I'm not going to sleep; I'm going out," protested the girl.

"Oh no, my dear," the nurse objected, but it required a great deal more persuasion to overcome Gwen's whim. Fortunately the nurse knew her business and she won out. But she had no doubts as to the likelihood of this American beauty starting on her return flight on the

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morrow.

"Cable my father I'll be back home day after tomorrow," were the last words the girl said before she relaxed into a quiet, restful sleep.

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CHAPTER X.

THE SUPREME SPECTACLE OF A LIFETIME.

It was midnight when Gwen awakened to find the nurse sitting nearby smiling calmly.

"Oh, you rested wonderfully," the faithful guardian observed when she saw her patient's eyes wide open.

"And I feel great," the girl declared as she jumped out of bed with agility. "What time is it?"

"Just midnight."

"Good! Don't lose a minute. See if Mr. Davis and Mr. West have awakened yet."

"They left the hotel at nine o'clock," the nurse informed.

"They did! Where did they go?"

The nurse arose and walked to a dressing-table nearby, picking up a letter. "Mr. Davis left this," she said. "I presume it will explain."

Gwen tore the envelope open almost frantically, and then she read the following note penned in neat handwriting:

My Dear Heroic Miss Dale:

We knew you would demand quick action, so we are leaving at 9 P. M., after a good rest, to do all in our power to make

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possible an immediate departure by air for America. You can reach us at your hangar whenever it suits your convenience. And, dear girl, pray don't worry—West and I are agreed that we must find that frightfully elusive island on the return trip. I have given the world the whole story of your magnificent triumph through the Associated Press, and, I am, with great admiration,

Yours sincerely,

FLOYD COOPER DAVIS.

"Gee, he's a good sport," Gwen told herself as she recalled the many admirable qualities this dashing gentleman of the press had shown. "He's so unlike the average fellow who wants to marry a girl the day after he meets her."

There was no doubting Gwen's intentions during the next twenty minutes—she was losing no time in making preparations to join her companions at the hangar, and, the nurse joined whole-heartedly in her efforts acting as a most respectful maid. When finally the girl was ready for the street and displayed a concern as to what the nurse would do in the meantime, the latter promptly explained the situation:

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"I was instructed to stay here until further orders from Doctor Hope."

"Doctor Hope!" Gwen exclaimed. "You know I can't get over that doctor part of it, but—er—when will I get to see the doctor again?"

"The first thing tomorrow morning."

"Good! I've some questions I want to ask him. Good-night. I'm off to the trusty, old seabird."

With these thoroughly light-hearted words, the girl walked briskly out of the room, and an hour later she was joining her companions of her great transatlantic flight at the hangar, thanks to a regular Ford taxicab which happened to be available at the right moment.

"Why didn't you wait until daylight?" West asked before Davis had a chance to say a word.

"Say, man, we're in a hurry," she ejaculated jovially.

"Certainly, and I knew you'd be here before we were half finished," Davis chimed in with a pride which was unmistakably directed towards the girl.

"Well, what's the condition of the old boat?" she asked.

"Unbelievably perfect," Davis announced.

"Everything is ship-shape excepting that light business—I can't figure that out in spite of being convinced it all came from our machine," West put in. The very next instant he crawled underneath the plane and began a

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careful investigation with the aid of his pocket search-light.

"That's what I'd call some mystery, but don't let it bother you too seriously, because a few rays of light aren't going to hold us back," she replied as her spirit mounted ever higher.

Davis was not slow in being infected with the same spirit. His memory of the thrills of the hours just passed so miraculously served to buoy him up noticeably.

"If I may be pardoned for resorting to a little of the good American slang, I'll say this is the life," he remarked as he continued to oil the mechanism adjoining the propeller.

"You like this sort of thing, don't you?" she asked as she fixed a studious gaze upon Davis.

"I should say I do—for your sake—but, as for myself, well, I'm satisfied with most anything decent," he replied without looking up from his work.

"And just what would you like to see happen on this return trip?" she propounded as if bent on drawing the man out.

"I'd like first of all to locate that island you've been telling us so much about, then I'd like to load the genius on board and hit 'er back to New York without too much delay," he confessed with the utmost candor.

"You are generous," she complimented. "Most of

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the men I've met wouldn't give a rap whether or not we ever found *the other man*. In fact, the most of the rivals would do everything half-way legitimate to put the absent one to a disadvantage."

"That brings up a very important subject, Miss Dale," Davis said as he held his oil-can aloft.

"What is the subject?"

"The subject has to do with giving every man a fair chance and leaving the ultimate decision to be based on his own merits," he replied. "Anyone with far below the average intelligence could see that your interest in Mr. Hope is more than a mere whim in favor of the square deal minus any affections. You would love him if you had the chance——"

"Oh, Mr. Davis," she appealed.

"Forgive me if I've been too frank, but—I'm going to do all in my power to help you get that chance," he hastened to add.

"I—I—really don't know what to say to you, excepting—I do think you are a noble man with a remarkable understanding of feminine fancies," she stammered, much embarrassed.

"We need to dwell no longer on the subject then, and meanwhile I'll just give this wonderful fly-boy more oil than could possibly be needed." Whereupon he eloquently illustrated his determination by resuming his activities

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with the oil-can a la very fast.

Gwen watched her good new-found friend with the keenest interest. It would be foolish to even intimate that she did not realize what was behind the veneer of restraint which he managed to keep around him constantly. She just knew this man would turn lover on a moment's notice of encouragement, but she also knew he was primarily gallant to the extreme, which safeguarded her against any premature advances from him.

"Well, anyway, I like you a lot," she admitted after a while.

"Which is a lot more than I expected."

"Why?" And Gwen's curiosity was aroused.

"Because I'm sort of a freak."

"In what way?"

"I fight better than I love." (Most certainly Davis kept right on squirting the oil in every part of the mechanism he could see.)

"You know I have already been wondering why it is you're not the champion pugilist of the world today," she remarked dryly.

"I can tell you."

"Do."

"Because I do not fight so much better than I love after all."

Gwen never respected the admonition: "Mum's the

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word" so much in her life before. She was surely going in a direction at a speed she could not maintain. The island must be found! Fidelity to a deep feeling of exhilarating memory would prevail. There was no man who could equal Given C. Hope.

"Guess I'm interfering with your work," she apologized after a moment.

"Guess you can give orders to work faster if you choose," he quickly retaliated.

"All right—speed 'em up, boy!" she urged by way of not succumbing to his amicably clever defi.

Forthwith Davis moved about with lightning speed ostensibly in fun, but he was really accomplishing the things West had mapped out as essential before the queen had arrived on the scene. Wisely Gwen diverted her attention to West, and she seemed to have an unlimited supply of suggestions for him.

The sun had come up before the men finished their work on the machine. They were obviously hungry and tired. The girl seemed more refreshed than ever, but she had a heart.

"If it's all you can do until the tuning-up process, let's go eat a big breakfast," she invited smilingly.

"Hurrah! A real English breakfast on me!" Davis fairly shouted in the best of humor.

"No, I'll buy," she insisted.

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"With two regular sea-going, air-going fellows like us on the job? Never!" And the girl knew Davis was going to pay the bill. His determined smile revealed the fact.

West said little and acted more. He was all washed and ready for the fattest meal in the land before Davis even completed exchanging conversation with Gwen. Just the same the trio got out of the hangar and into a nifty rustic dining-room in less than an hour and never was the British style of breakfasting emulated so adeptly before. All three had ravenous appetites and it was a regular war-time bill with all the tax trimmings the waitress had ready when they took their final sips of tea.

"Now since we feel so much better for our masticating activities, I would urge that you gentlemen return to the hangar and get the machine ready for flight by 11 o'clock tonight," Gwen instructed. "I'll go back and fill the ears of the British journalists with interviews so much galore that it will make the best American movie actress blush with shame in comparison. You can sleep from eleven until six the next morning and then we're off."

"But, may I ask, Miss, how do you figure to reach the latitude you say the island lays in at night by starting at that hour?" West queried.

"I've got a hunch—" she began.

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"Enough!" exclaimed Davis. "There's nothing so reliable as a hunch as nonsensical as it usually seems. "We'll bank on your hunch, Miss." And he took a sly glance at West, who fidgeted just a trifle.

"Orders are orders," West acquiesced as he started to go.

* * * * *

When six o'clock of that next morning dawned, two brave men and a braver girl stood ready to climb into an efficiently tuned-up hydro-aeroplane ready and anxious to complete a record-smashing expedition. The girl had more than kept her word in the matter of filling the ears of the newspaper men and fully ten thousand people were assembled to witness the hop-off.

"You can see for yourself that there are as many rubber-necks in Great Britain as there are in Great United States," Gwen observed as she nodded at the great crowd.

"Yes, curiosity discriminates between no climes or no peoples," Davis replied. "Still, I admit I'd be out to see you start anywhere myself." He spared himself from suffering to see the full effect of his words by laughing heartily in a way which could not be classified! Davis was clever, despite his eagerness along certain lines.

"Avast! Who comes there?" she thereupon exclaimed as she espied a dignified procession advancing to-

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wards them.

"It looks like something royal," he commented as he fixed his gaze upon the marching straight line.

A moment later the aviatrix was being elegantly addressed by an Englishman of distinguished bearing. She heard him say something about the British government being proud of her and ere she got the full import of the proceeding a gold medal aflame with dazzling diamonds was pinned on her leather coat. She was just in the midst of thanking the donors profusely when she discovered Doctor Hope standing in the rear.

"Oh, doctor, come here," she called impulsively.

"Yes, ma'm." And the next instant Doctor Hope stood before the aviatrix giving respectful attention.

"Say, do you know Given C. Hope?" she asked looking the kind-faced physician squarely in the eye.

"No," he denied without hesitation.

"Then why did you ask me about him as if you knew him?"

"I just wanted to see if he was one of the causes of your nervous ailment."

"And did you so decide?"

"I sent the nurse right up."

"Gee," Gwen gasped. "And why the nurse on that account?"

"Love gone wrong makes people reckless, my dear

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girl—that's all," the doctor replied.

The girl thought deeply for a moment and then extended her hand, saying: "You're an exceptional doctor—I actually believe you could cure love sickness."

"If I may be pardoned for being bold, I would urge that you be totally immune from all such maladies until you are safely on American soil again," he advised. "It is not conducive to good health to be too much in love and high in the air at the same time."

Davis simply could not refrain from chuckling aloud. Gwen shot a reproachful glance at him for it, but she too was amused. "Who said the Britisher doesn't see the humorous side of a serious question once in a while?" she asked of no one in particular.

"Love is too slushy a proposition for an occasion like this anyway," joined in West, who did not claim to be anyone in particular.

The words of these last few minutes on British territory seemed extremely trivial, but, just the same, they served a good purpose, for they removed the burden of worrying over the forthcoming nervous strains and afforded all three of the courageous crew plenty of cause for feeling exuberant.

When came time for the rounds of farewells and God-speeds, Gwen was positively jolly. Davis shared in this attitude, for as he assisted the fair pilot to her post,

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he blandly remarked:

"You didn't seem much excited over the high honors they paid you."

"Well, I'll tell you," she promptly responded, "I'm not looking for laurels; I'm looking for a certain island."

Both laughed heartily and they were still giving vent to their mirth when West set the propeller into powerful motion and the mighty seaplane moved rapidly away from the spot amid the cheers of the multitudes.

All day long luck stayed with the venturesome crew. A night of ideal weather conditions followed. For the two hours prior to midnight West piloted the machine while Gwen took a nap. Davis never closed his eyes once. He couldn't. He was completely charmed between his natural love of excitement and his thoughts of the remarkable girl whom he knew could never forget him for those hours of unceasing thrill.

"I wonder who's soused on Broadway tonight!" West ventured by way of opening conversation with Davis while the chief little commander slept.

"Not me anyway," replied Davis. "However, I'm intoxicated enough with anticipation of what's going to happen before this journey is ended."

"Nothing unusual will happen," West predicted. "This machine is bang-up and'll make it easy."

"But, I'm thinking about that island our com-

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mandress was thinking about before she went to sleep," the other reminded.

"It won't worry me if we never find it," West declared. "I think that fellow Hope must be a nut anyway."

Gwen woke up just in time to hear this last sentence.

She might have become irate if she had not opportunely realized that West was at the controller which he could make spell disaster so quickly in case he were either excited or peeved. As it was, she scolded mildly:

"You mustn't call anyone you do not know at all a nut, Mr. West."

"'Scuse me, Miss, but I think it's the need of a little sleep anyway," he hedged.

"Then sleep and wake up with a better vision on the values of men," she ordered rather curtly.

Thereupon she took over the responsibility of piloting the machine, and for nearly four hours West snored so loudly he could be heard above the din of the engine. All the while Davis was unusually quiet. Several times Gwen asked him if he felt all right and each time he assured her that he did.

"Then why all the lack of sociability?" she demanded.

"Well, I'll tell you, I'm wondering what became of the mysterious lights," he confessed with a great deal of

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reluctance.

"Hasn't there been anything doing in that line yet?" she asked.

"No."

"Why worry then?"

At that instant there was a curious buzzing noise directly underneath the couple. It continued for only a few seconds and then died away completely.

"There it is, that's what I'm really worrying about," Davis shouted in some excitement. "The other trip it was light and this time it's a buzz. What kind of nerves could stand such queer, weird things?"

"Steel nerves," she answered confidently. "We're still flying all right, aren't we?"

Davis saw the point. What was the use of borrowing trouble? He would forget the annoying sounds of the buzzing and attribute it to nothing. He got himself right into the proper mental attitude to regard the whole situation thus, but right at the wrong time the buzz buzzed again, and he trembled from hand to foot.

"Lord! What is that?" he exploded.

"Have a heart, Davis, have a heart," the girl begged.

Davis again saw the point and he was heartily ashamed for being weakling enough to even pay any attention to such a slight disturbance. Nevertheless he

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could not help knowing that Gwen Dale was seriously worried over the unwelcome noise the same as he was, and he determined to find out what caused it. But, he did not get far with his investigation.

"Wake West up quickly," Gwen ordered. "I think I see land."

Davis got West aroused just in time for all hands to realize that straight ahead of them a strong search-light had suddenly started to play all over the heavens. Gwen blinked her eyes. Davis strained his eye-sight. West got busy with his telescope and was the first to utter a sound.

"It's an island about as big as a freckle," he yelled excitedly.

"The island," Gwen emphasized in exultation.

"And, what about the search-light?" Davis asked thoughtlessly.

"It's his and we must dodge it at all costs," she replied as she strenuously turned her attention to her wheel and wings.

Instantaneously the plane was flying at a sharply curved angle. It was an unfortunate error in judgment on the fair pilot's part, because it brought her directly over the island and right into the shaft of light which emanated therefrom. Involuntarily the girl leaned over the side of the fuselage and peered down the line of this

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shaft of light. Then and only then she knew she was less than five hundred feet away from Given C. Hope, the man she sought. She knew that with all his wizardry he saw her, although she could not see him. But she was determined to complete the circle she had started all too prematurely. And, by the time she had covered two-thirds of the distance, she regained her senses enough to know that a bright moonlight was staying her in good stead. She peered down over the side of the fuselage again. She saw the form of a man running at top speed away from a small circular observatory. She did not wonder—but Davis wondered—why the shaft of light suddenly became stationary.

"For God's sake, don't!" she screamed with all her might, as she leaned so far over the side of the machine that Davis grabbed her around the waist in alarm. "Don't! Don't!" she repeated frantically.

"Hey, Miss, you're steering dangerously unsteady," West yelled as he narrowly missed losing his balance.

Gwen immediately turned on her aerial anchorage switch and the curious flappers on the ends of all planes started to operate furiously much to the consternation of both Davis and West. But, when in another few seconds they realized the seaplane had come to a dead stop and was resting quietly mid-air, their fears were allayed. As soon as the propeller ceased to rotate, the girl leaned over

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the edge of the fuselage again and looked down upon the little island. She was just in time to see Hope take a flying leap and come to an abrupt stop. She felt sure she could see the mouth of that cave and she instantly thought of those terrorizing noises she had mistaken for approaching footsteps. Simultaneously she recalled the inventor's assertion that he could blow up the entire island by simply stepping upon a certain trap plate. The keen sense of realization that a terrible peril was impending, made her uncontrollably wild in her shoutings of appeal.

"I love you! I want you! Please let me come down and talk to you again!" she begged in tones so shrill that there was no doubt but what he who was below heard.

Davis and West had both sighted the form of the man. West was gazing through his telescope and was the first to see the man wave his hands in warning.

"He's signalling us to move on," the mechanic announced as an apprehension seized him. "We'd better do it too," he added in the next breath.

"No! No! I will not leave him," the girl cried.

"Now he's got his arms stretched up to the skies and he's leaning his head far back, looking up away from us," West shouted.

"By jove, he must be praying," Davis exclaimed.

"He is! He is!" Gwen affirmed. "He means to end

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it all now! Oh God!"

"How does he mean to end it all now?" West demanded as he scented the true situation.

"By blowing up the whole island," she replied as she closed her eyes and wrung her hands.

West was not slow to act. He leaped into the fuselage and turned on the elevating switch like a flash. Promptly the seaplane dashed straight upward as an elevator with breath-taking speed. One thousand feet, two thousand feet, three thousand feet, four thousand feet it climbed magnificently. As they were reaching five thousand feet all eyes of the crew were fixed on the island below.

Then there was a low rumbling. The very next instant there was a terrific explosion, accompanied by flaring flames and a flying molten mass remindful of a volcanic eruption. All witnesses saw the whole island rise high in the air. It seemed as if it came within a thousand feet of them. The limp form of a man could be seen to mount the air with the debris. Then all fell with a roaring crash back into the sea and was submerged. The island had been completely demolished and in its place was an angry, disturbed ocean.

The detonation had its effect by way of impact upon the air currents, and the seaplane trembled as if it was about to be crumbled up like so much flimsy paper. West

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was the first to realize that they were falling. He leaped squarely into Gwen's lap, starting the engine in the same moment, and with the desperation of a man who knows a terrible end is near, he manipulated the controller and the wings. The machine responded only slightly to his efforts. Their descent was only a little more gradual and none the less precarious. Suddenly there was a groaning in the motor and with two violent exhaustions it stopped abruptly. Ere another breath could be taken by anyone they were drenched with great sprays of water. They had crashed into the turbulent sea. But they had landed on sound, seaworthy pontoons. This was their only advantage as they started a hair-raising battle to survive the onslaughts of an aimless drift in the vast reaches of a mighty and murderous deep.

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CHAPTER XI.

HARROWING HOURS.

WHEN the plane settled on the breaker-infested surface of the ocean, it at once became apparent to West that the only way to prevent her from capsizing was to press Davis into service as a mobile counter-balance.

"Climb onto the top wing and fight with all your might to throw yourself on the elevated ends as fast as the sea pounds her up and down," he ordered. "I'll do my best to get the engine to going again. You be ready to drive her back up in the air if the propeller budges, Miss."

Davis scrambled up on the top wing and immediately plunged into the most desperate struggle of his life. As fast as he would succeed in getting to one extreme tip of the wing, that side would sway downward until the lower wing dipped into the water. He fought courageously to force his weight to produce a balance, but it was a feat next to impossible. Meanwhile West was exerting superhuman strength in his attempts to determine the cause of the engine trouble, but he too was confronted by a proposition in which the predominating elements consisted of futility. Gwen Dale remained at her post

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of duty, feeling every minute that she was rapidly becoming numb. Occasionally she essayed to arouse herself by taking a furtive glance at the spot where it seemed the island had been, and she sighed so many times that she felt an acute soreness in her throat. Once when the plane was dashed to an angle of forty-five degrees, she actually wished it would go on over, bringing the relief of the inevitable. The next moment she thought of the lives of her two companions and she was ashamed of herself for yielding to such melancholy.

It was just at the break of day that Gwen was thoroughly aroused from all of her stupor. Straight ahead in a trough of the sea she discovered the form of a man. He was battling gamely to reach the pontoons. And, oh what a wonderful swimmer was this man!

"West! West!" the frightened girl called. "Here's Hope in the water and alive!"

"Where?" West demanded looking around quickly.

"Right there!" she shouted. "See him?"

"Yes." And West was already climbing down towards the pontoons.

"Rescue him, for God's sake, rescue him!" she screamed as she too started to climb down to the pontoons.

Luckily West found a stout rope fastened to the pontoon upon which he landed. He quickly threw it as

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far out into the sea as it would go. The man in distress saw it, but could not reach it. West realized his unhappy predicament. There was only one thing to do and that was to plunge into the sea and offer his strength still free from exhaustion to supplement the fast-diminishing physical power of the unfortunate. The sturdy mechanic turned to look after Gwen. She was just sliding onto the pontoon.

"Look!" he yelled. "Hang onto this rope and pull with all your might when you see me grab the fellow."

"All right! Hurry!" she yelled back as she grasped the rope.

West hastily though carefully placed the rope under his left arm and dived into the sea. Then started a battle royal which Neptune himself must have admired. West fought every conceivable alternating current to reach the man who was rapidly losing his stamina. Gwen Dale was sure the fight was being waged in vain. The sea increased its roughness and frequently titanic waves would hide both men from her view. Notwithstanding this, she clung onto the rope well knowing her very life depended upon it. After what seemed to be a whole hour to her, but what was in reality only a minute, she felt a tugging at that rope, although she could see no human being anywhere. Instinctively she pulled with all her might. Slowly she reclaimed foot after foot of the rope. Pres-

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ently as her strength started to leave her entirely, she discovered for the first time in many seconds the heads of two men. One was West and the other—well, she blinked her eyes, and, she continued to blink her eyes until she saw four hands grasp the side of the pontoon. Then she recognized West's companion in distress to be none other than Floyd Cooper Davis!

Was she disappointed or did she rejoice? In the first place, it had never occurred to her that Davis could have fallen off the upper wing. In the second place, she was extremely anxious to have Given C. Hope as her own!

But there was the man himself—Davis struggling with all of his might to pull himself up out of the water with West doing all he could to help him. Indeed, even the expert swimmer needs the mediocre one occasionally when comes moments of distress!

"Oh!" Gwen cried. "He fell in trying to save me!"

Thereupon she summoned all the strength she had left to assist first Davis and then West back onto the pontoon. And, they did get up out of the water safely. But, the girl swooned and neither of her consorts had sufficient strength left to help her much. However, Davis managed to reach down into the water and to bring up a handful of it, which he dashed into the girl's face. The results were gratifying and five minutes later all three of the crew were once more at their respective posts of

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duty.

The sun came up a while afterwards and the sea calmed down a little. But, this was not so very encouraging, because the only thing to be seen was a nerve-racking monotony: the endless expanse of death-dealing water.

"Does anyone know how near we are to the main ship lane?" Gwen asked as she brought to bear every ounce of energy she possessed to merely turn her head to West, who was working away with surprising energy on the engine.

"God alone knows, Miss," he replied. "We've been drifting at a mighty high speed."

"Well, will the engine ever run again?" she almost demanded.

"I'm afraid not," he answered.

"Where's Davis? In the water again?"

"No, he went right back on top as brave a lad as ever lived, and he's saved our lives a dozen times," the mechanic declared with unrestrained admiration.

"Why doesn't he come down to see if I'm all right?" she persisted.

"If he did, by the time he got down, you wouldn't be here," West replied.

"Where would I be?" she asked aimlessly.

"You'd be in your watery grave, that's all."

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Gwen shuddered.

"Guess he'd better stay on the roof then," she mumbled dryly.

* * * * *

All day long the seaplane had drifted hither and thither, its occupants knew not where. No one had gotten a wink of sleep and fatigue became potential as a foe, a foe that must be combatted. Every eye in the crew suffered from extreme strain as a result of the constant lookout for a ship. Seemingly they were far off the course of regular transatlantic traffic and they would have to trust to mere luck indefinitely since they had no means of finding or reaching the lane from which they might be picked up.

"Oh, how I hate to think of going through a whole night of this," Gwen complained wearily, as she watched the shades of darkness approach.

"It's no use fretting about that, Miss—nights will come and nights will go, and all we've got to do is our level best," was West's cheerful reminder.

This night, however, did not make anything like a reassuring advent into the sea-bound trio's lives. There was a disturbing howl in the wind, which seemed likely to develop into a gale at any moment, and there were some black, dense clouds hovering low. The sea was

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choppy and fickle. No navigator could rest under such conditions as existed.

"What'll we do if it storms?" the girl asked as she sensed the dangers which lurked all around.

"We'll fight it," West declared grimly. "We'll have to—there's no starting this engine again and so I'll go up and relieve Davis for a while. He must be nearly dead."

"Oh yes, dear Mr. Davis, he has been as quiet as the dead for a mighty long time," Gwen responded. "Tell him to come down for a nap, poor boy."

West was soon on the top wing and he was amazed at the dogged courage Davis was showing in forcing the machine to maintain an equilibrium.

"How's it going?" West asked.

"Fine, excepting I'm a little groggy," Davis gasped.

"Hop down in the pit and take a snooze—I'll juggle the beastly thing for a while."

Davis did not wait for a second invitation. He climbed right down, landing in the outstretched arms of Gwen.

"Oh," was all he could say as he stretched out and let the girl hold his head in those arms. The very next instant he was sound asleep.

The sight of the man recuperating so peacefully was too much for the equally exhausted girl, and the last thing she remembered was a mental note as to what a strong

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profile he had. It was upon this profile her cheek rested as she lapsed into a restful unconsciousness.

It was something like two hours before either sleeper even stirred. Then both awakened with a start.

"What is it?" she asked half-dazed.

"We must have hit something," he guessed.

"What makes you think so?" she pressed as she peered anxiously into the dark.

"I felt a jolt and—look!" he exclaimed pointing to the starboard.

"What's that?"

"It looks like a Bronx billboard."

"It's a ship-camouflaged," she discovered.

At this juncture West jumped down into the fuselage.

"A derelict, mates—our salvation if we can only tie to it," he announced as he started to climb on down to one of the pontoons. "Come quick and help me, Davis."

Within a twinkling both men were valiantly endeavoring to fasten the plane's one rope to the derelict's bow, which was plainly visible. The wind was increasing in velocity so rapidly and there was such an ominous rumbling among the black clouds which were concentrating overhead that all the incentive necessary was at hand to spur the stalwarts to achieve their purpose at all hazards. But they could not strike anything to tie to and

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when they saw the derelict was drifting away from them Davis decided on a bold stroke.

"Tie the end of the rope in a slip knot to my wrist and I'll swim over to the thing and tie to something," he instructed.

"It'll be a tough job to keep the sea from smashing you to death against that steel," West warned.

"I'll manage some way," the other replied confidently.

"All right. Wait until the Miss gets down to stand by in case I have to go out after you."

"I'm right here on the job," Gwen announced as she slid down to the pontoon. "What are you going to do?"

"Davis is going to swim over to that derelict and tie us to it," West explained.

"Oh no, I'm afraid," she objected.

"Don't be afraid, little girl, I'll turn the trick," Davis reassured with a smile such as graces only the face of a truly brave man.

At this moment West had arranged the rope's end around Davis' wrist, and the latter dived into the water without the slightest hesitation. In the darkness of the night and the roughness of the sea, it was difficult for the two watchers to keep track of his movements. Finally all trace of him was gone for fully five minutes. Just as consternation was rising high in two anxious brains,

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they heard his voice:

"Come over to my house and see me," the voice yelled.

By supreme straining of the eye-sight Gwen and West sighted Davis standing on what looked to be the upturned side of the ship. He was waving his hands wildly.

"Can you pull us closer to you?" West shouted as he felt a tugging which assured him Davis had tied them to the derelict.

"Sure thing—we've got anything you want over here," Davis yelled back jovially.

It was at least fifteen minutes before Davis accomplished the task of pulling the seaplane alongside the floating shipwreck. Even then Gwen had great difficulty in getting on board even with the assistance of both men. Once she almost slipped into the water, but the strong hand of Davis saved her.

* * * * *

The tired trio had actually enjoyed fully a half hour's stay on the capacious portion of the ship which maintained a remarkably even keel well above the breakers. As unsafe as it was, it seemed to all to be a haven of security, and they ceased to worry so much about the storm which threatened to descend upon them at any moment.

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Then something happened. It was the last thing any mortal could expect under those extraordinary circumstances. A strange, heavily bearded man, attired in a tattered uniform of an American seaman, suddenly leaped into sight at the other end of the ship. He howled like a madman as he ran straight toward the stunned group. Before Davis could bring himself to believe he was not having a terrible nightmare the stranger attacked him with a viciousness equal to that of the wildest beast. There followed a hair-raising, blood-curdling combat. The aggressor was unmistakably bent on committing murder; the defendant was gamely struggling to overcome his adversary.

West was too surprised to arouse himself to action at the beginning, but when he heard Gwen Dale scream in great terror, he began a participation which soon ended the affray with the stranger pinioned down to the boat on his back and groaning from the pain of the finishing blow he had received.

Davis tore his shirt to shreds in order to bind the gladiator and keep him captive. When with the aid of both West and Gwen he then completed the job of insuring the man's helplessness indefinitely, he peered down into his face.

"Where in the devil did you come from?" he demanded.

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The prisoner rolled his eyes as he mumbled: "For days. Where from, where to, nowhere. Just nights."

"Guess he's a little daffy from the wallops," West surmised.

"Oh no, blows like that are sweet to me after all these headaches I've had for days," the man declared.

"The only survivor of this wreck, I suppose," Davis observed, looking up at Gwen who still trembled from head to foot.

"Yes—starving to death and oh God, how thirsty," the sailor muttered in husky tones.

"Which explains the assault—the man's crazed by his hunger and thirst," Davis commented, again glancing up at Gwen. Thereupon he produced a tin box out of an inside pocket and opened it. "Only four beef cubes left, but he shall have them all," he said as he started to feed the poor man.

"Here's a couple of swallows of water," West said as he handed Davis his canteen.

Even while the last cube was being vigorously masticated by the victim of harrowing experiences, the storm which had been brewing so long, came down upon the group. The sea started to pound the seaplane against the side of the derelict, and it was a foregone conclusion the weaker craft would be broken in two.

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"We've got to have what food and water there's left," West declared.

"Yes, by all means—I'll get it," Davis promptly agreed as undaunted as ever.

"Oh, don't tell me he has to go back into that terrible water again." Gwen chimed in appealingly as she stared at West.

"Either him or me's got to do it," the latter replied.

"I will," Davis persisted firmly. "But, for God's sake, West, hold onto Miss Dale and don't let her slide into the sea."

It was a sudden lurching of the derelict which inspired him to issue this warning, and as he noted the storm was increasing in fury at an alarming rate he ran down to the place where he had tied the plane up and with remarkable agility leaped into the water clinging to the rope with both hands.

Thus he managed to reach the much-battered aerial vessel which resembled a huge ghost in the darkness of the night. Hand over hand he tugged and pulled until he had reached his insecure destination. Giant waves swept over him constantly, but he always came through hanging tenaciously to the rope. Once on a pontoon he lost no time in climbing into the fuselage, where he hastily gathered all the food and water he could find. Without even pausing to rest for a moment he started

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back on the perilous return journey, still with the succor of the trusty rope. And he made it almost easily, for Floyd Cooper Davis had become as near a superman as it was possible to be. He had assimilated suffering and privation far better than West, who looked as if he were about to drop in his tracks at any instant.

"Thank God that you're back safe," Gwen murmured as her trembling increased. As she uttered the words she pushed herself into his arms and nestled close to his bosom. "You are such a wonderful man," she whispered a moment later.

Davis felt a thrill go through his very heart as he heard these words, but he made no comment. He possessed too much manhood to take advantage of a situation he felt convinced was produced by the fact that the girl was verging on delirium brought on by the long, unbroken series of hardships she had been forced to endure.

"Wonder if there's any shelter to be had on this boat at all?" he asked as he took advantage of the streaks of lightning to peer down the full length of it. The bound men at his feet squirmed. All looked down at him.

"That way," he gasped as he tried to indicate the direction from which he had come.

"I'll see," West announced and he promptly made his way to the end. He returned a moment later and announcing the discovery of a lookout's nest fore, he

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picked up the sailor and started for it, bidding the others to follow. Davis took Gwen bodily into his arms just as a drenching downpour of rain started. And oh what a haven they found! True, it was only a cold, barren, water-soaked semi-circular nest so small that the four human beings could just barely squeeze into it, but its upturned side served as a roof and kept some of the rain and wind away. As inadequate as it was and as terrorizing as life was in it, Davis earnestly breathed a prayer of thanks to the Supreme Being for it.

"It's where I've lived for days and nights," the sailor gasped.

"No wonder you went plumb crazy then," West commented as he shuddered. "I can feel something giving away in my brain already."

"Tut tut," Davis warned. "This is no time for pessimism. It is an ideal time to prove one's optimism. It might be much worse."

* * * * *

All night long, with the tempest never abating, this stranded group huddled in this nest. Just after daylight the skies cleared up and the sea became as calm as a sheet of glass. Gwen had slept a good part of the terrible night in Davis' arms. None of the men would sleep. Each had expressed the desire to serve the whole and consequently all three did. The sailor had so far recovered

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his sanity that he made intelligent inquiries as to how it happened his new friends came on board and finally West released him from the improvised restraint feeling sure there would be no more trouble from him.

"Where are we?" Gwen asked as soon as she got her eyes open.

"God alone knows, my dear girl," Davis replied. "But we're going to take advantage of the fair weather of this day to do all in our power to attract some passing ship if there is such a thing in this latitude."

Painfully he crawled out of the nest and assisted Gwen after him. West and the sailor followed. Once upon her feet the girl took a quick survey of the surrounding sea.

"Where's my seaplane?" she demanded in consternation.

"Gone forever," Davis informed. "We saw her go down just as a flash of lightning lingered over her soon after you went to sleep."

"Oh! what if we had been on it?" she asked as she quailed.

"We would have been where we have to go sooner or later anyway," Davis replied philosophically. "But now for breakfast." Whereupon he smilingly began producing the tin boxes he had recovered from the ill-fated aerial pathfinder.

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As they devoured the all too insufficient supply of food which Davis doled out as equally as he could, they all became better acquainted.

"My name is Frank Slavin and this was my first voyage," the sailor said. "We ran into an iceberg and all hands except me went overboard to death. As near as I can figure it all happened six days ago, and I've been floating around desperately ever since."

"What boat is this?" West asked.

"A tramp steamer called John Henry."

"Where was it bound for?"

"England. We started from Boston."

"What did you do before you shipped out?" Davis inquired.

"I aspired high, but not wisely," the man confessed.

"In what line?"

"Musical. I thought I could write the great American opera, and I almost starved to death in the attempt. In fact, it was hunger and an inability to get a job at anything else that led me to this cursed boat."

"So here, Miss Dale, is another aspirant come to grief and no good end," Davis remarked as he glanced at the much interested girl.

"Oh, but I will win out yet if I can ever get my two feet on dry land again," the sailor persisted.

"Then you hold no grudge against the system be-

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cause of your failure?" Gwen asked eagerly.

"What's the use to hold a grudge?" he asked sagely. "There's no inspiration in grudges and you have to have inspiration in order to 'come back' as the slang experts say it."

"Don't you know that humble genius has little or no chance to get a hearing anywhere today?" she pointed out significantly.

"No, I didn't know it," he admitted innocently. "How did any of the big ones start then?"

"Luck helped them in most cases," she declared.

"I've got to differ, lady, I——"

"Hooray!" West shouted at that moment, arising to his feet and jumping up and down as if he had suddenly gone mad.

"What is it?" the other three demanded, likewise getting up.

"A ship! A ship!" he proclaimed as he pointed at a trail of black smoke coming up over the horizon.

"You're right, mate," the sailor yelled.

"Wonderful!" Gwen exclaimed as she waxed wild with joy.

"Now all hands, sparing the lady's, to signal the vessel," Davis ordered.

Every bit of wearing apparel all three men could spare without exposing their bodies too much to the ele-

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ments was pressed into service in making a quite large though crude flag. The various garments were spliced together with splinters the men were able to dig out of the frame parts of the derelict with their fingers. Not a one of them escaped shedding blood and enduring much acute pain in this desperate work, but they were all happy just the same. When the flag was completed they abided their time until the ship's nose appeared over the horizon and then the stalwart shoulders of Davis served as a standing place for West, while he energetically waved the distress signals which must be discovered. West waved until he felt as if his arms would be twisted off and Davis held steady long after he began feeling a dizziness in his head.

Could Fate hold out longer against such courageous souls? No. Their signals were sighted when the good ship was more than two miles away, and it was the work of only two hours for the captain to get a life-boat to them and back again safely on board. It was the mighty liner George Washington, bearing President Woodrow Wilson on his final voyage from Europe to America, and the signals of the stranded quartette had possibly spared the vessel from colliding with the derelict, as it was directly in its pathway.

When President Wilson heard that among the rescued party was Gwen Dale, the American aviatrix who

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was the first girl to make a non-stop flight across the Atlantic, he promptly went to her, warmly congratulating her upon her fine achievements and her good fortune in being spared from a tragic death far at sea. He shook her hand heartily and in turn extended his democratic greetings to her three companions.

"May I not add the felicitation that some way every mortal seems to find chances of survival better than ever since a world war has obliterated so much of the resignation to mere fate?" the distinguished statesman smiled broadly and kindly.

* * * * *

The whole story of all the thrilling experiences of Gwen Dale and her companions had been wirelessly and published forty hours before the George Washington reached port. The net result was surely an augmenting of the interest of the record-breaking crowd at and for miles around the Hoboken pier.

Mr. and Mrs. Dale were the first to greet Gwen when she descended the gang-plank. Weeping for joy was by no means confined to these worry-worn parents. Davis, West and Frank Slavin stood by unobtrusively watching the touching scene. Finally Gwen recovered sufficiently to think of them.

"Father and mother, you owe everything to Mr. Davis and Mr. West, the two great heroes of my life,"

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she said impressively.

"Leave me out of it, please," West begged. "If I was half as good a man as Davis, I'd be proud, but I'm not, so I'm not proud."

"Come, come, pal," Davis beseeched. "Why spoil my quiet celebration over landing safely by embarrassing me like that? Anyway, here's Slavin too—he did something."

"I owe everything to you folks," Slavin promptly replied.

"Well, anyway, we won't argue the subject," Davis protested. "And Miss Dale——" whereupon he impulsively plunged his hand into a coat pocket.

"Yes," she responded eager over his pause.

"Er—when you've gotten all rested, I'll call, if you don't mind," he ventured.

"Certainly you're going to call, not once but often," she laughed.

"But this is on very special business," he specified as he withdrew his empty hand from his pocket apparently satisfied.

"Now you have me curious," she confessed. "What is the nature of the special business?"

"Some time during those awful hours after we abandoned the plane, something very strange came into my possession," he stated. "I admit I am mystified over

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it—and—and—even at that I think you will be interested in it."

"Gosh!" Gwen ejaculated. "This is a swell way to leave a fellow, all up in the air and wondering silly."

"I'm sorry, but, as you will agree later, it is best to undertake to solve this mystery under more auspicious circumstances than these," he apologized.

Before Gwen had any chance to glean more advance information, Davis had warmly and graciously said good-bye to her and her parents and departed with Slavin as his charge.

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CHAPTER XII.

SO RISETH HOPES FROM THOSE WHICH HAVE FALLEN.

Two whole days and two whole nights passed and Gwen Dale had received no word from Floyd Cooper Davis. She was both worried and exasperated, worried lest he might be ill and she surely would be exasperated if he was not! By the time noon of the third day rolled around the girl could not endure the strain any longer and she telephoned to him.

"Say, are you working for some insane asylum?" she demanded jestingly through the telephone.

"No, I've been in the employ of one Morpheus practically ever since I left you," he replied. "Never slept so much at a stretch in my life, but gee, I feel great now."

"So do I, now, but I had to do the 'phoning to get that way," she reprimanded.

"Oh, I was going to call you up today for sure," he declared. "I want to come up this evening and deliver this mystery thing to you."

"But, I don't want you to wait until this evening; I want you to come up right now," she ordered rather autocratically.

"Then there's nothing for me to do except to obey,

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so here I come," he accepted and the next minute he was on his way.

The hour she had to wait for the man seemed like an age to Gwen, but when she got her first glimpse of him in a rich brown suit of the latest style, and all that goes to make a handsome man look irresistible to a girl who knows he deserves admiration, she forgot all her fretting, threw her arms around his neck and squeezed him until he winced.

"Some unexpected reception, I'll say," he laughed.

"Oh boy, I'm glad to see you." And she would not let loose of him.

"Say, you are a suffragette, aren't you?" he ventured, as he patted her pretty cheek.

"Why do you mention that now?" she inquired.

"Why, you're not depending upon me for a single bit of the initiative, and you don't seem prone to grant any of the referendum," he joked.

"That's all right, Mister Davis, you'll have your chances yet," she reminded as a mischievous smile played over her face.

"I have my doubts," he answered.

"What do you mean, you have your doubts?"

"Well, let's look into this mystery and perhaps we'll both understand better," he suggested as he placed his hand in his pocket.

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"Oh yes, I had most forgotten about that," she said, taking Davis by the hand and leading him into an adjoining reception room, where they made themselves comfortable closely side-by-side on a luxuriously upholstered davenport.

"You knew this man Hope pretty well, didn't you?" he began.

"Yes, and oh what a terrible shame it is that he should go as he did!" she replied as an expression of sadness swept suddenly over her face.

"If you could have induced him to come back to civilization, what then?"

"Oh, please don't cross-examine me like that," she begged.

"For the sake of humanity I must."

"Why?"

"Given C. Hope was a wonder and there must be some way to impress upon the world at large that circumstances which drove him into oblivion must not be allowed to prevail in the future. Here is the most eloquent evidence of all the man's rare genius." Davis pulled an odd-shaped ten-ounce bottle out of his pocket and handed it to Gwen. "An autobiography in a bottle—a thousand words of it engraved on the metal cone you see fastened in the middle, and, there are some remark-

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able evidences of the deepest lore in several sage statements."

Gwen examined the bottle with the keenest interest, but she could not see any of the words on the metal cone.

"Where are the thousand words?" she asked.

"Watch closely," he instructed as he placed a finger on the bottom of the bottle.

Instantly there was a phosphorescent glow. It emanated from inside the cone, and, curiously enough, it not only illuminated, but it magnified and Hope's last message to the world could be read with comparative ease, and, this message had been given every protection against the onslaughts of the deep, inasmuch as it was encased in water-tight and air-tight re-enforced glass, which had been blown around it most adeptly.

My life was everyone's life, but no one wanted it.

Modernism murders more audaciously though not so bloodily.

Men ignore, women deplore unknown genius, the bore.

I'd rather be a bricklayer than a talented brick.

These and many other recorded musings caught

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Gwen's eyes. Then Davis called her attention to a series of lines at the very top of the cone.

She's a modern girl of the clouds—really a high girl. God spare me from lowering her any. I would if I returned to claim her, because I think aspiring would be a folly in my case, since I am so unforgiving, and anyway, I can do a better turn by making mankind sorry than I can by making one girl glad. Others should be saved by my radicalism.

"Oh he is a real martyr to the cause of giving others better chances than he had," she exclaimed in admiration

"Yes, undoubtedly," Davis agreed. "But, read his message further," he then urged, as he pointed out another series of small lines whereupon Gwen read the following:

My long-distance electric sign failed to work on the promised night, no doubt just to remind me that I wasn't invincible, and the thought of not being invincible is most discouraging to me. I've always had things happen to me like this just at the wrong

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time, and I wasn't built to stand it, so there's nothing to do but to fall as gracefully as I can.

"Poor man," the girl murmured sympathetically. "This explains the failure of that never-to-be-forgotten night when the skeptical reporter had his inning in triumph."

"Yes, and it gives a perfect insight to Hope's nature which is thus proven to be all out of tune with the natural vicissitudes every mortal must meet successfully in order to win out," Davis observed. "Hope possessed everything necessary to attaining high purposes, but he lacked one indispensable essential."

"What was that?"

"Plain, every-day sticktuitiveness."

"You're right."

"And he had too much of another trait," Davis pressed on.

"What?"

"Sensitiveness."

"I'm sure of it."

"Now look here and see a deep mystery cleared up," the deeply interested man continued. Thereupon Gwen read the following in the bottle:

When I attached a secret searchlight to

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Gwen Dale's seaplane, my purpose was one of fiendish desire to confuse her should she attempt to fly back to me. I hooked the storage battery up with the engine, and timed it so it would occasionally send out a flash of light for a few seconds after enough revolutions to cover only a couple hundred miles. All the while I've feared it might not work perfectly, and there would be a nerve-racking buzz which would surely drive her mad.

"Oh!" the girl gasped as she shuddered convulsively in unpleasant memories. "Isn't that uncanny!"

"Very, and it shows another side to so much genius," he commented.

"Yes, I see it, the dangerous, harmful side——"

"Exactly—the side which must be curbed while the better side is being given a fair chance to develop."

"How did you ever happen to get this bottle?" she demanded suddenly.

"Do you remember the last time I went into the water—when I went back to the plane for our remaining supplies?"

"Yes."

"When I went under one of the breakers, I felt

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something strike me on the head," he explained. "Sheer instinct made me grab at my head with one hand while I clung to the rope with the other, and much to my surprise I discovered I held a bottle. I jammed it in my pocket and forgot it until I got on the George Washington."

"Remarkable, isn't it?"

"Exceedingly so, but here see one more important passage in this farewell note," he suggested as he turned the bottle around. Then Gwen read the following:

Knowing my shortcomings, I can do some overcoming by refusing the opportunity this high girl could bring to me by refusing and letting myself be an example rather out of the ordinary. You see I always did lie more or less, I lied to her. I told her I was married. God knows all women were too fortunate to ever join me in wedlock. So I make up for some rascality by trying to help others now without admitting that the rascality of others does not exceed my own.

"Well, it is to his credit that he did deny himself easy sailing in order to spare his brother and sister unknown aspirants from the rough sailing which is so

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commonly allotted to them," she commented.

"Precisely, and, even though he had his faults and his brave sacrifice may be futile, the example he set is worthy of the widest extolling for what effect it will have on society in general," he observed. "I intend to devote a life-time to this very work of exploring for the talented in need. Henceforth my sole purpose is to help others in their purpose."

"And I join you in that," she announced enthusiastically.

"Good! Our first hope, thanks to the honored and lamented Hope, shall be Frank Slavin," he proclaimed. "You must hear him sing and play his own compositions. He's really a combination of Victor Herbert and Verdi, and, as totally unheralded as such as he could possibly be. However, by the time our exploitation reaches its climax, the whole world will know him well as one of its best musical geniuses."

"Won't that be grand!" she exclaimed in unalloyed ecstasy. "And we found him in more oblivion than anyone else ever had to combat," she added as she recalled that awful night on the drifting derelict.

"In conclusion along this line of thought, I want to confide in you to the extent of announcing my intention of launching some sort of a publication devoted to finding and helping such luckless aspirants as Given C. Hope

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Frank Slavin. For once I am truly glad I do know something about journalism, for it is a potential medium for conducting such a campaign as I plan."

Gwen Dale was profoundly impressed. She realized that the happy upshot of all the extraordinary experiences she had survived was a most exalted inspiration to a most admirable man of very high character. This was reward enough since it certainly presaged unbounded usefulness to humanity. And—ah yes, she did want to have a place in the work. Moreover, she was still a suffragette in ideas and ideals though a most charming one, delightfully devoid of any of the mannish proclivities one is so apt to associate with thoughts of the very word.

"I—I—don't know how to say something I want very much to say to you," she stammered in some confusion as she felt a blush spread all over her winsome face.

"Well, then, I'll say something I do know how to say," he ventured.

"What?"

"I love you and I want you to honor me by becoming my wife," he proposed.

Gwen looked the man squarely in the eyes and most soberly she heaved a mighty big sigh.

"At last," she murmured as she crept right into his arms.

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"Is that your unique way of saying yes?" he asked quite helpless to repress a smile of amusement.

"Yes, and I just feel so happy that I could hop into a seaplane and fly a million feet high for joy," she confessed coyly.

"What's the use of you flying any more, you're high girl now," he demurred.

And, as they divided their time between planning their future and reading more of the contents of Hope's odd bottle of autobiography, they exchanged kisses so frequently and with so little regard to the rest of the world that Mr. and Mrs. Dale were attracted from another room and were able to witness fully five minutes of a pure love's manifestation quite undiscovered.

THE END.



The First of His Family

A Story Wherein the Game is Ambition Versus
Environment

BY DELBERT ESSEX DAVENPORT.

THE FIRST OF HIS FAMILY

CHAPTER I

AFTER being a hopeless, reckless victim of criminal environments all his life, "Kid" Black, a fellow of twenty-five years of incessant sullenness, suddenly discovered he possessed a conscience. This awakening from the stupor induced by evil, aimless drifting came as a result of being brought to the full and awful realization that he was a dangerous gunman at last. Some unseen force within him whispered the astounding information that he was worse than a nonentity and he shuddered at the thought of being a menace to humanity.

These ruminations, revolutionary to him, swept over his whole being when for the first time in his life he was in the act of pulling the trigger of his revolver to murder a police official whose life he sought for no other reason than that he had been offered a price of two hundred dollars by a gang leader with motives unknown to him. "Kid" Black did not—he could not—fire that fatal shot. Instead he fell in a heap in his hiding place and wept bitterly for the first time in his life. Indeed, in tears he was a spectacle, because he was every inch a thug, in both appearance and manner.

Abandoned in infancy, and never having been able to determine his parentage, this human derelict had been from earliest boyhood among the legions of ruffians of

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the most unwholesome section of New York's East Side. Until he reached the age of fourteen years he lived with a more or less kind-hearted crook by the name of Black, who never gave him any other name than "Kid." However, the heartless Mrs. Black finally drove the lad out in the streets, and he was kicked and cuffed from one end of the East Side to the other. No wonder, then, his viciousness gained the upper hand and directed him into a precarious course!

But on the night of his initial conscientious impulse "Kid" Black held no malice towards any one. He saw himself as his own handiwork. He recalled having flouted the idea of going to work to earn an honorable living. His past activities as a burglar and footpad came back to him as a frightful memory, and he instinctively asked himself why he preferred breaking the law to being law-abiding. His mind having been dormant in wanton indolence, it was not capable of much reasoning, and no noble thoughts could find place in it. Therefore the young man's next few minutes were devoted to wondering in amazement why he could not commit murder when he had run the gauntlet of criminal practices without even so much as pausing to reflect that he was doing wrong. He had run wild with impunity. Now he was about to set himself right with the world without any duress other than that imposed by his own newborn conscience. But, oh,

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what a fight he confronted! What a handicap he was obliged to overcome! Uneducated, uncouth, and absolutely friendless, he faced a cold world.

So it happened on that memorable night that a sober-faced, half-dazed young hoodlum, this same "Kid" Black, found himself slinking away from the scene of his contemplated murder truly overwhelmed by his own mental rejoicing over escaping with unstained hands. He sought temporary solitude in the recesses of Central Park; because he knew he could not have one moment's peace of mind if he returned to his squalid apartment, where his landlady, known in all foul resorts as Midgie, awaited his return with the expectation that he would have enough money to defray the expenses of the night's usual orgy. She knew he was on a mission which would net two hundred dollars, although she was not aware that it entailed murder. Not that she probably would care much, but uppermost in her mind was the anticipation of two hundred dollars' worth of hilarity. She was a young woman, not altogether bad-looking, except for the signs of dissipation which were noticeable. She was the widow of "Lefty Mike," who had been killed in a gambling brawl, and ever since she had essayed coquetting with "Kid" Black without success, because there was no romance in his soul, and he absolutely abhorred women—the kind he had known since earliest realization.

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Once seated on a secluded bench in Central Park near one of the several ponds, the worried Black lapsed into meditation. He was so engrossed in his own muddled thoughts that he did not display the slightest precaution when he took his revolver from his pocket and studied it leisurely. It did not require a very prolonged gaze at that weapon to provoke a shivering which rocked his whole body perceptibly. Then suddenly he tossed the firearm into the pond, as if extremely anxious to get it away from him quickly.

He was still staring vacantly into the pond when he was aroused by a gentle tapping on his shoulder. He arose abruptly to find himself confronted by a fashionably dressed young woman, and the first thing about her to command his attention was her benign smile.

"Did you finally decide not to kill yourself, too?" she asked.

"Yes," he replied promptly, though sullenly, for he knew he was lying, and that he had not thought of suicide, but he was too adept at evasiveness to suddenly acquire candor.

"Then that makes two of us who are going to try again," the young woman continued. "I'm so glad to have company in my most melancholy moment."

So saying, she extended her hand to "Kid" Black,

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who was so confused by this act that he hesitated long before he accepted it.

"It's merely to acknowledge introduction, for my name is Bertha Grant," she added reassuringly, whereupon he shook her soft, slender hand awkwardly and still with a scowl on his face.

"Now, may I ask your name?" she asked.

"Naw, I ain't tellin' me name, 'cause I'm a-gonna change it," was his gruff answer.

After making a fruitless effort to persuade the young man to exchange confidences with her, and, apparently being moved by close sympathy in all her interest in him, Bertha Grant finally gave up and, after presenting her card, she left him to his sad ruminations. The man merely grunted as she walked away, but it was because his soul was still devoid of sentiment. After the girl had disappeared from his view, he gazed at the card she had handed him and then tossed it to the ground, but before he left the spot he, for some inexplicable reason, picked it up again and deposited it in his pocket.

It was long after midnight when "Kid" Black wandered aimlessly down a select section of Fifth avenue. As Fate would have it, he walked right onto the scene of a street robbery, and from a distance of only a few yards, he witnessed the exciting struggle which followed the intended victim's resistance against being relieved of

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his valuables. "Kid" Black's blood was chilled upon recognizing the masked footpad as his pal, "Mex" Tello, who simultaneously recognized him and called for his assistance in conquering his rebellious prey.

"Kid" Black fought a terrific mental battle as he stood glued to the position he had taken and, finally, without concluding on a definite plan of action, he impulsively leaped to the clinched gladiators. Guided entirely blindly, he forced himself between the men, separating them, much to the surprise of both. Then with lightning speed he struck the footpad with his fist on the point of the chin, bowling him over and rendering him unconscious. With equal celerity he faced the intended victim and got his first good glimpse of the man's face, which he found to be youthful, manly and handsome. He gazed into that face for a moment and then scrutinized the man's nobby evening clothes from head to foot. He obviously admired the stranger's neat appearance.

Meanwhile the rescued one betrayed his perplexity. He was surprised over being assisted by one he felt certain was an ally of his assailant. He propounded questions out of curiosity, and as he was being shoved forcibly up the avenue he heard this reply from the rough "Kid" Black:

"Never youse mind who I am. Beat it! I'll 'tend to dat guy."

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But instead of satisfying the man, this remark mystified him the more, and he insisted that his rescuer call on him at his office the following day, when he desired to give him a suitable reward for his services. As Black shoved him on his way he slipped him his card.

After the man had gone, Black glanced at this card and discovered he had helped Philip J. Harrison, a well-known lawyer.

Meanwhile "Mex" Tello was not slow in regaining consciousness, and his first impulse was to reap terrible revenge on Black, but when the latter returned to the scene of the encounter he was ready with a ruse.

"Can it! Can it!" he warned in husky tones. "I've saved youse from ten years in Sing Sing wid dat one punch. Dat gink's a stool pigeon, and there'll be a dozen fly cops here in a minute. Chase yerself fast and watch yers truly make me getaway."

With these words said, Black dashed down the avenue at top speed. "Mex" Tello watched him in bewilderment for about ten seconds, and then he took warning and wildly raced away.

But even then "Kid" Black did not return to his place of abode, for as soon as he had outdistanced his pal, he boarded a passing street car, riding down to Forty-second street and Broadway, where he did something very unusual for him—purchased a newspaper. He sta-

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tioned himself near the entrance of a large office building and proceeded to peruse it quite collectedly, but he was unable to interest himself, turning from the sports and racing pages finally to the editorial page, where for the first time he evinced a keen interest in what he read. In fact, he seemed actually startled. Yet his manner was that of excited avidity. Evidently what he read was the biggest surprise of his life, and inevitably it was to have a great deal to do with his future career.

Black became so engrossed in what he read that he moved over under a brighter street light, that he might see better. Here was the "lead" of the special article which attracted the young ruffian's attention:

AMERICA'S FUTURE DEPENDS ON MEN AND WOMEN WHO WILL GIVE GOOD NAMES TO LARGE AND HARDY FAMILIES

This is the day more than ever of the sanctity of family names, which shall be perpetuated and hallowed by large numbers of descendants. The inroads made on human life by the appalling European war are such as to make inattention to scientific multiplying positively a menace.

Investigation has revealed an astounding number of men in New York who have no interest whatever in marriage or children.

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All this impressed Black so strongly that he cut the article out of the paper with his penknife and, after carefully folding it, deposited it in his pocket. Almost immediately thereafter he decided on a plan of action, and he hastened to the loathsome apartment he called home. Here he was greeted with an avalanche of vile words from the lips of Midgie, whose patience had been exhausted by his delay in returning. Midgie was one of those little women of the nether world whose dissipated face was counterbalanced by her cuteness of stature and good figure. Even the tawdry, sporty clothes she wore did not hide the certain amount of feminine beauty she possessed. Her hair was golden and fluffy—her eyes were blue and dancing, but beneath them the flesh was puffed, spoiling their attractiveness. But Midgie was a veritable little wildcat in manner, speech and action when her temper was aroused, and it was thoroughly aroused on this occasion.

"What do yer think I am, sittin' here like a rummy the whole night waitin' for you?" she demanded angrily as Black entered the narrow hallway.

"You didn't have to wait for me," he replied gruffly. "I've paid me rent, haven't I?"

"Yes, but didn't you promise to come back with some dough and take me out for a little sportin' at Jake's dive?"

"Didn't get de expected coin though."

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"Well, then why didn't you let me know? I could-a gone out with a dozen other guys if I'd a-known this."

"Anyhow I'm through with de carousin' stuff for de present," Black announced as he attempted to get by the pugnacious-appearing landlady.

"What! You through?" and then she laughed with derisive coarseness. "What'er you gonna do—join church or somethun?"

"Nope. Get outer me way."

"Don't go orderin' me 'round, and don't shove me neither," the irate little woman came back, as her ire grew furiously.

"Aw, shut up," he yelled as he pushed his way past her roughly.

Midgie was not to be so easily cast aside. She followed the man right in his tracks, berating him unmercifully every step of the way. Without paying any heed to her, he went straightway to his room. She followed him in.

"Say, this is my room—I pay de rent to youse for it, and I never invited youse in," he said, as his displeasure over the woman's pestering tactics grew.

"Yes'n it's my house, and I can put undesirable tenants out in a jiffy any time I gets ready. See?"

"Go ahead and put me out, but you've gotta work fast or I'll get out before you can do it," was his reply.

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"What'er you mean?"

"I mean I'm beatin' it." And by this time Black was packing his few belongings in an old, battered suitcase.

"What for—just 'cause I've been givin' you the devil?" she asked, now suddenly puzzled.

"Aw, hell, no; I ain't a-carin' nothin' 'bout what you do or say," he replied in marked disgust.

"Then it's some dirty trick yer after pullin' on me, eh?" she yelled fiercely.

"Nope, I've got to follow me man up de State to get dat coin," he lied, coming to the realization of the need for a little diplomacy.

So saying, Black yanked off his coat and threw it on the bed. He was just in the act of donning another one when Midgie impulsively grabbed the discarded garment and, with brazen officiousness, started to search the pockets. The first article she extracted was Bertha Grant's calling card, and instantly mad jealousy swept the last vestige of reason from her depraved mind.

"So yer ditchin' my love," she screamed, as she pounced on the man like an infuriated tigress.

"Your love! Who ever knowed youse loved me?" he demanded as he roughly shook the woman loose.

"Well, I ain't never bragged about it right out, but I do love you and—and—no upstart of another woman is

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a-goin' to get you without a damn unpleasant fight," she yelled.

"Aw, you make me sick—there ain't gonna be no love or no marryin' for mine wid youse or anybody else," he yelled back at her with emphasis.

Then followed a scuffle in which Black merely attempted to defend himself and to eject Midgie. He succeeded finally, but she retained Bertha Grant's card. This was to be the directing key to the campaign of revenge she resolved upon peremptorily.

After finishing his packing, Black searched through his old coat. He found the clipping and Harrison's business card. He studied these for a moment and then he suddenly decided he must have Bertha Grant's card, too. Grabbing his suitcase, he bolted out of his room to find Midgie. But before he had time to find her he bumped into Max Marx, the formidable leader of the Marx gang, of which Black was a member.

"Well, did youse croak de gink?" Marx demanded.

"Not yet—he didn't show up on his beat yet, but I'm goin' after him now," Black replied as he felt his nerve fail him for the first time in the presence of this dangerous man.

'Get damn busy, an' soon as I read 'bout it in de papers I'll come through wid de two hundred bucks," Marx assured Black. Then, shaking his finger warningly,

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he added: "But don't forget I've sent another bloke after him, too, and de one dat gets to de marked man first is a-gonna get de cush."

After succeeding in getting away from Marx, the now thoroughly excited Black prosecuted a house-wide search for Midgie, but he could not locate her, and finally he left, much chagrined over the loss of the card and his inability to remember the address it bore.

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CHAPTER II.

AT ten o'clock the following morning "Kid" Black called on Phillip J. Harrison at his handsomely appointed office.

"If youse wants ter thank me for de little favor I done youse last night you can slip me fifty bucks as a loan," Black proposed the moment he faced the lawyer.

"Gladly, my good fellow," Harrison agreed, much impressed by the directness with which his rough-appearing visitor got down to business.

"But tell me something about yourself," he added, as he handed over a crisp \$50 bill.

"Dere ain't nothin' to tell 'bout meself, 'cause I ain't nobody yet, but I'm a-gonna try to be," Black told his new-found friend, with his characteristic sullenness.

"I'm mighty glad to hear you say that, and please remember I stand ready to help you in your battle at any time so long as you stay on the level."

"Much obliged, but I ain't expectin' to call on youse or anybody else for much help—I'm a-gonna pull meself outter this rut meself somehow."

Thus it happened that "Kid" Black got a really encouraging send-off from Harrison, who was genuinely sincere in his desire to be of assistance to the man.

The thug went straightway from Harrison's office to

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the Pennsylvania Railroad station. He was bent on getting out of town as quickly as possible. After purchasing a ticket to Kansas City, Missouri, he bought a newspaper. The first headline to cross his line of vision made his blood run cold. It read:

POLICE OFFICIAL MURDERED IN COLD BLOOD.

Perusal of the news story revealed that the victim was the very man he had spared the night before. "The other guy" Marx mentioned had "got" his man.

"Gee, I wish my train'd hurry an' start," Black muttered as he looked up from his paper and wiped the cold perspiration from his brow.

His eagerness to get away from the scene of all his sins and transgressions became so pronounced that he paced the floor most nervously. As his excitement grew he became unmindful of the fact that his conduct was such as to arouse suspicion. He glanced at his watch every two minutes, and he clutched at his paper convulsively. An alert detective in plain clothes discovered him and observed him closely. He was sufficiently impressed to make a mental note of every physical peculiarity of the man, but he did not deem his conduct such as to warrant arrest on suspicion.

"It's just another mug for yours truly, Detective

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Rand, to remember," the officer told himself.

When finally "Kid" Black was comfortably settled in a seat in the smoking car of the train which was speedily carrying him away from all the memories he longed to forget, and which he prayed would never hark back to him, he was really happy for the first time in his whole life. He felt a sense of security in the going-away motion of the train, despite his occasional worrying over the murder he had planned, but which another had committed.

Even as he rode westward the irate and revengeful Midgie was invading the elaborate apartment of Bertha Grant, in a seclusive part of Central Park West. There in that abiding place of opulent refinement was being enacted at that very moment an extraordinary battle of wits between two extremely different women. High-minded, though clever, Bertha Grant found an interesting adversary in vile little Midgie. She feared her no more than she would a mere child.

After a brief word-battle in which Midgie excelled, the two women found a common ground in their coinciding penchants for being melancholy. Bertha eventually persuaded her wild visitor to lay aside her hostility.

"I assure you I have no desire of estranging you from your husband," Bertha told her in soothing, confidence-inspiring tones.

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"Husband! He ain't *my* husband, but I've been a-hopin' he would be," Midgie confided boisterously.

"Indeed!" the other ejaculated. "No wonder he contemplated suicide last night, then."

"What'er yer mean, an insult?" Midgie expostulated with renewed wrath.

However, Bertha promptly tamed her down again by relating her experiences of the night before in Central Park.

"I had fully made up my mind to end my own life," she said in conclusion of her narrative.

"What! You thinkin' 'bout croakin' yerself with all this wealth at yer command?" the dubious Midgie exclaimed.

"What is all this without the man I love—the man who has just jilted me for another woman?" Bertha asked blandly.

"Then, like us blokes in the underworld, you of the four hundred gets the blues once in a while, too," the other observed.

"Yes, and if you will help me in my little scheme to win back the man I love, I'll help you hold the man you love," Bertha promptly proposed.

"Sure, Mike; but how'n the devil can I help you any?"

"Leave that to me, but to start with, you must come

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and live with me immediately," Bertha announced.

"Say, that's great—with me livin' here with you like a swell, I'll make 'Kid' Black sit up and take notice like a breeze," Midgie boasted. "Why, he'll be beggin' me to marry him."

Thus it came about that these two women, so diametrically opposite to each other in everything except melancholia, joined hands for mutual benefits, but with the gullible Midgie totally unaware of just what was expected of her in payment for the luxury she was to enjoy. She became Bertha Grant's maid ostensibly, but in reality she was the young society girl's pupil, for from the inception many hours of each day were devoted to assiduous study of etiquette and grammar, in which lessons Bertha acted as teacher.

It did not require much time for Midgie to become deeply mystified over the dogged persistence with which Bertha kept her "in school." Very early in the game she ventured to ask why there was so much hurry about getting smart.

"Because you must at least appear to be a lady within two weeks or I am lost forever," was the only reply she got.

"Gee, it's some job when you figure that it took me all me life to get like I am now," Midgie commented as she became the more puzzled.

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CHAPTER III.

ONE week later "Kid" Black arrived at Excelsior Springs, Missouri, a health and pleasure resort thirty miles north of Kansas City. His first notable act was to register at a small but respectable hotel under the name of Will B. White.

"And I mean to be what me new name says," he told himself as he contemplated the signature.

Under his new name the young East Sider invested his few remaining dollars in a small peanut stand located near one of the springs, and he started in earnest to make an honest living for the first time. He had not adjusted himself to his new environments when he met Walter Frank, owner of a dramatic stock company, playing in an adjacent airdome. In fact, Frank was his first customer, and as he munched his peanuts the rotund showman chatted genially.

"You won't get very lonesome here, 'cause it's a lively burg," Frank assured the novice peanut vender. "If you care to come to the show tonight I'll gladly give you a pass. It's a new bill, and I've got to pad the house anyhow."

"Sure I'll come and give yer troupe the once-over," White agreed rather gratefully.

"Fine," the showman replied, and then proceeded

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to scribble on a pass. "And don't forget to give the show the hand," he added, as he handed over the ticket.

"Well, all I got to say is, if yer show suits me I'll clap me hands and do a little whistling besides," the young man promised.

That night one of the first to arrive in the airdome was "Kid" Black, alias Will B. White. He was in a sullen mood, and he was inclined to ruminate sadly. A feeling of bitterness grappled in his heart with a morbidity inspired by his growing realization of being an outcast with uncouth proclivities. He had become disgusted with the sweater he wore. Yet he had seldom worn a shirt and collar. He crushed his checkered cap rather viciously as he awaited the rise of the curtain. Suddenly he found that he hated his cap.

"Nobody else wears 'em at all, and still it's the only kind of skypiece I ever owned," he mumbled as he gritted his teeth vehemently.

Thus it happened that when the show finally began this one witness was far too glum to be susceptible to enjoyment, and he did not clap his hands once, nor did he whistle any approval. On the contrary, he lapsed into a veritable lethargy and remained rigidly inert until a petite and attractive, golden-haired ingenue made her entrance onto the scene, disseminating vivacity in generous quantities.

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"Hully gee! a chicken—now the show'll begin," Black mumbled audibly, attracting the attention of several persons sitting near him.

He watched this little actress perform with growing interest, and when between the acts she offered a fairly diverting singing specialty, he got the impulse to get acquainted with her. He consulted his program, and learned that her name was Peggy Jules.

"Me for Peggy at de stage door," was her new admirer's threat the moment he determined her name, and he lost little time in finding Walter Frank.

"De show's all right, and yer kiddo Peggy is great," the "Kid" declared enthusiastically.

"Thanks, friend. Go out and boost it to all your friends," the showman replied.

"Ain't got no friends, pal, and dat's why I want to meet yer Peggy, if she's not married."

"She's not married, and I don't want her to launch into any matrimonial escapades either," Frank announced, less affably than was his habit.

"Aw, have a heart. Anyhow I don't want to marry her. I just want to meet her to find out what a nice girl acts like."

"Well, let me tell you something, young fellow. She's only eighteen years old, but don't think she's not wise enough to know how not to act nice when it's necessary,"

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Frank corrected.

"I ain't a-gonna make any row necessary—I'll treat her on de level," the "Kid" promised anxiously.

"You bet you will, and she won't need no one to help her sit you down, believe me. You've got Peggy sized up wrong."

"Oh, I don't know," the young tough ventured.

"Just to show you I'll take you back and introduce you to her."

Forthwith the manager made good his word.

"Here, Peggy, you little devil, meet a friend of mine," he yelled, staying the girl in a hasty retreat across the stage towards her dressing room.

"All right, old dear, who is he and what is he?" she asked as she danced up to her employer.

"He's the peanut guy, and——"

"The peanut guy! And he wants to met a regular actress?"

"Sure, why not?" Frank asked, thoroughly amused.

"You know me, Al—I've got a champagne appetite and all."

"Dat don't scare yours truly—I'll buy," the "Kid" interposed.

"Ah, a regular fellow," Peggy observed laughingly. "I'm glad to meet you," she added, as she extended her hand.

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"I'm with you, kid," he acknowledged as he accepted her hand.

"What's the name, please?" she asked demurely.

"Will B. White."

"Will Be White! What's the color now?"

"Black."

"Nigger?"

"Nigger!" ejaculated Frank, squirming comically as he began to believe that he had instituted scandalous proceedings in his troupe.

"Aw, quit yer kiddin', I'm as white as me name, and I'm a-gonna be a lot whiter before I get through straightenin' up," the "Kid" put in bravely.

The impulsive earnestness with which he spoke interested Peggy and robbed her of most of her jauntiness. She suddenly discovered that with all his crudeness this stranger was likeable. He was sturdy after a fashion, and his serious mien betrayed a great determination which was guiding him to heights above mere passing follies. A ramollescent tingling swept through Peggy's heart as she momentarily studied the "Kid." True, he was obviously a ruffian, but she was not many notches above that class, because her life had been spent among rough people, and she had acquired most of their ways.

"Say, you're not a bad scout at that, and so far I like you. Let's go have a drink," she said.

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"Of spring water," Frank ordered.

"Water!—on the side only—we're going to have some booze," she announced firmly.

"Better cut that stuff, Peggy," the old man urged. "It will bring you more sorrow than joy."

"Oh, but I like it, and I must have what I like," she insisted.

"Maybe *I* won't want you to booze," Black ventured.

"If you won't it'll be a sure sign that you want it all for yourself," she laughed tauntingly.

"Well, we'll fight dat out later," he replied, as he winked at Frank.

"You'll do a lot of fighting out later if you stick around Peggy," the showman warned as a mischievous twinkle illuminated his eyes.

"Well," Black replied, as he thought of high-tempered Midgie, "I can't say that I ain't used to it."

But although Peggy and Black were together for an hour that night they did not quarrel once. However, they did both drink several cocktails, and each betrayed the effects of a slight intoxication.

"Gee, this is what I call a good time—a little booze and a nifty little tipsy feeling," remarked the girl rapturously as the time flitted by swiftly.

"It's a little high-class for me, but yer a better girl

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than's ever been out with me before," the young man confessed.

"And they call me wild and woolly," she laughed.

"But you're not to me—you're what I call a damn fine lady."

"Gracious, how you flatter me—er—I can't remember your name."

"Will B. White, and I will be by you if you'll treat me nice like this all the time," he replied seriously.

Thus it came about that "Kid" Black, who was now so determined to be White in name and conduct, fell in love with the little actress of the barn-storming company, and by the same process she became intensely interested in him. It was because they occupied about the same social strata, and both had vast improvements to make before they could hope to mingle with the elite. Simultaneously Walter Frank and the "Kid" quickly became close friends, and within two weeks after their first meeting they jointly rented a small bachelor apartment. Prosperity blessed both from the inception of their strong, mutual friendship, and naturally this combination of circumstances created plenty of opportunities for Black to get better acquainted with Peggy, who had his whole-souled respect.

But she did not discourage him in his penchant for imbibing too freely of liquor. She joined him in it with

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avidity. Inevitably there had to come an evening when he drank too much, and his nature automatically reverted back to its old wont. This manifested itself in his subsequent attempt to roughly embrace the girl and to angrily resist her justified struggling. Then came a verbal detonation.

"Say, where do you get that stuff?" she demanded. "Surely you don't want to be regarded as a ruffian all your life by everybody, including near-ruffians like myself, do you? Answer me, *do you?*"

These words straightened Black up surprisingly, and he promptly resumed the restrained, more dignified manner of White. Peggy's rebuff accomplished more than this: it struck a vital spot in the man's heart by bringing to him the realization that it was for that reason he had fled from New York—to cease being what he had always been and to start all over again. And here it seemed to him as he gazed intently upon Peggy's pretty though resolutely grim face, was a golden opportunity.

"You've got de correct dope, kiddo," he replied finally. "Help me get de crooks out of me crooked self and it'll be me point to see dat you don't regret it."

"Atta boy," she congratulated cheerfully. "I'm with you as long as you're halfway decent, and I'm going to remember these words you speak tonight."

Thus started a closer friendship rather auspiciously

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There was at least understanding, although neither the man nor the woman contemplated any definite plans. One important upshot of the companionship was that "Kid" Black promptly eliminated intemperance from his list of faults, and his success in accomplishing this tended to encourage him greatly. The new feeling of respect for woman which Peggy had inspired in him also augmented his pleasure in life. For three weeks he escorted the little actress to her hotel every night, and not once did he betray the slightest sign of undue familiarity. Finally, however he weakened just a little. There was too much temptation in her pretty, red lips.

"Listen, Peggy," he said on that night, "you know since I've quit drinking liquor and gone in for the mineral water stuff I've got to have some sort of a substitute stimulant. What about one kiss a night?"

"All right," she agreed quickly, "but it must be strictly platonic."

"I'll gamble with you on that platonic, whatever it means," was his reply, as he grabbed her gently and gave her anything but a platonic kiss.

When she reprimanded him for the tight embrace which accompanied his kiss, he appealed to her meekly.

"I love you, kid; dat's why I did it, but don't let it worry you until you see how I come out."

Peggy was not displeased by this confession, but she

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assumed the mysterious attitude of one desirous of testing the mettle of one with whom she was seriously considering before casting her lot finally. 'Twas on this basis that the rather curious romance of this couple began, and in the very nature of things it was obviously inevitable that many strange things would happen in the course of events. "Kid" Black, alias Will B. White, was so much a crude product of adverse circumstances, and Peggy Jules possessed a character composed of such widely different qualities—partly good, partly bad, and partly indifferent—that just how far she would be able to go in restoring the latent probity of such a lifelong miscreant was a matter for grave doubting. The fact that the man really loved the girl as far as his capabilities would permit, and that she was not seeking to avoid reciprocity seemed to presage either a woeful blunder or a happy fruition. However, neither worried over what the future might bring.

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CHAPTER IV.

ABOUT this time sensation broke loose in New York City as a result of investigations of the murder of the police official. "Baldy" Ruff, the real murderer, had summoned gall enough to turn State's evidence and to inform the authorities that "Kid" Black had committed the murder for the price of \$200 at the behest of Max Marx, the gang leader. Ruff claimed to have been an eye-witness to the tragedy, and he insisted that he personally had attempted to prevent the foul deed, adroitly advancing as his reason a fear of such business, breaking up a gang out of which he was making much money without killing people.

This testimony led to the arrest of Marx, who promptly shielded himself by protesting that Black had been actuated by a personal grudge in slaying the official

"I had nothin' to do wid de dirty work, 'cept to tell Black he was a fool for threatenin' de poor guy," Marx declared, feigning great aversion for bloodshed.

"Kid" Black's disappearance was regarded as strong evidence against him, especially in view of his all-around criminal record, which was so well known to the police. The district attorney was inclined to believe the "corroborated" story of "Baldy" Ruff in its entirety, and consequently he set in motion all of his machinery to accomplish the apprehension of the missing thug.

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Among all the countless thousands of people who read these legal proceedings there was one far more interested than all others. This one was Midgie, now a maid in Bertha Grant's apartment. The ominous developments brought consternation into this curious little woman's heart. Her all-controlling impulse was to do everything in her power to protect "Kid" Black, for whom she entertained a love after the fashion of her kind.

Under Bertha's quite efficient tutelage she was rapidly acquiring practical education, and a knowledge of etiquette. She had displayed reassuring aptitude from the inception, bidding fair to come out of the rough into a state of passable refinement in record time. She was inherently shrewd and possessed the feminine instinct of intuition to a marked degree, but, after all these days, she was still at a loss to understand Bertha's motive in retaining her in so much luxurious comfort. She realized that she was more of a pupil than she was a servant. She often wondered why Bertha seemed to be in such a hurry to improve her manners. Her benefactress devoted two-thirds of her wakeful hours to instructing her protegee in the rudiments of ladylike deportment. Nor did she neglect to teach her grammar, specializing in how to talk properly.

She was always made to understand that she was to be cared for handsomely, and that she was to be assisted in her troubles by way of reciprocity for helping Bertha

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in her affairs—affairs concerning which Midgie had no inkling of an idea. Invariably Bertha was secretive, and when dwelling on subjects pertaining to herself she was most cautious, making sure to not even intimate the nature of her plans. Midgie long since decided Bertha had lost all interest in love, and she noted with repressed curiosity the woman's devotion to the perusal of law books. She was amazed at the seemingly unlimited supply of money her hostess had at her command, and she was perplexed over how infrequently she went out to enjoy the gaiety money will buy.

After reading with alarm the announcement of the district attorney's determination to cause the capture of Black, the distracted Midgie ventured into Bertha's boudoir, where she found her lying down, weeping softly.

"'Scuse me, but it seems to me we're both in serious trouble, and neither one ain't——"

"Not ain't, Midgie—isn't is better," Bertha interrupted.

"Well, neither one of us isn't helping the other one bit as we agreed."

Forthwith Bertha leaped to her feet, and after gazing steadfastly at Midgie for a moment, a wan smile spread over her face.

"You're making fine headway, Midgie, and in another month I'll have you so well trained that you could pass

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as a lady anywhere," she said. "Then you can help me, because that will be still a month prior to my sweetheart's wedding day."

Thereupon she loaded Midgie down with books, and ordered her to get busy with her studies.

"But, ma'am, I wanted to say that I can be helped in my troubles *now*," Midgie persisted.

"However, my dear, if your lover turns out to be guilty of murder, you won't want to help him, and, anyway, you can only wait until he is found," was the rather discouraging reply she got.

Although far from being satisfied, Midgie went to her own room, and settled down to assiduous study of her books. She manifested an insatiable hunger for knowledge.

"There's no use talkin', I've got to get smart mighty quick if I am goin' to be any good at fightin' them lawyers for the Kid," she told herself as she plunged into the work of digesting the rules of proper speech.

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CHAPTER V.

MEANWHILE "Kid" Black, alias Will B. White, was enjoying himself in Excelsior Springs. He had not yet made it one of his habits to read the newspapers regularly, and therefore he was blissfully ignorant of the ado his absence was causing in New York. Anyway he had become engrossed in a course of study Peggy Jules was giving him. This course consisted mainly of reading and writing and the technique of play manuscripts, Peggy having decided to make an actor out of the man. He was not exceedingly anxious to act, but he was genuinely grateful for the opportunity of improving his education.

"Bone-headedness has been at de bottom of all me troubles, kid, and now it's de knowin' of this dat makes me tickled to death to learn from youse de tings a gentleman should know," he told her.

"Well, I'm being strictly on the square with you—you're not going to set the world on fire, even though I teach you everything I know, because I know just about enough to come in out of the rain, and that's all," she replied good-naturedly.

"You can talk dat way all you want to, but just de same you're de smartest gal I ever knew——"

"Gee," she interrupted, "they sure must be awfully dumb in New York."

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"Dumb! Damn dumb!" he affirmed, with some vehemence, and then he added in disgust: "Say, I know a gal there who has been unconscious all her life."

"Unconscious? Was she hit on the head by something?" Peggy inquired in surprise.

"No; but her head was missed when they passed around de brains, just like mine was," he declared.

"Did you know this poor girl very well?"

"Did I know her well! She was in love wid me."

"What's her name?" Peggy demanded with a renewed interest which strongly resembled jealousy.

"Midgie."

"Midgie what?"

"Lord only knows—she don't."

"Some society dame who could get by with half name and half-dressed, I presume."

"Say, Peggy, how can any one off in de head know any society stuff?"

"Well, what I want to know, Will White, is, did you *ever* love her?"

"Never in me life. Why should I? What did she ever do for me 'cept spend me dough for booze and fuss at me when I talked about straightenin' up?"

"And do you consider me a better girl?"

"Do I? Say, you're a queen and she's a rowdy. Why, you're a lady. I—I—*love* you, kid."

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"We won't discuss the politics of the case now," she ordered. "The thing I've got to do now is to cut out my wild ways and really live up to the reputation you're forcing on me."

And thus it came about that Peggy did some studying on her own account, while she served as teacher to "Kid" Black.

A whole month passed by as if by magic, and by this time Peggy had become a great favorite among the frequenters of the spa who whiled their leisure evening moments away at the airdome watching Walter Frank's stock company present melodramas of the old school. Black noted Peggy's popularity among young men with growing apprehension. He frequently overheard dandies plan to meet and win her, and he was annoyed by the penchant of several of these admirers for sending her flowers and boxes of candy. He feared the mental superiority of all his fellows. Yet he was making encouraging progress in polishing up, and his personal appearance was no longer that of an East Side thug, for he wore natty clothes of the latest style.

One evening after the show he, as usual, escorted Peggy to her hotel after she had rejected at least a half dozen invitations from other admirers. Despite Peggy's elusive cuteness and her proclivity for laughing gaily at his attempts at love-making, he persevered, because he

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felt a deep, irresistible necessity for hastening his suit. He wanted this girl for his own, to honor and respect, and he did not want to run any chances of losing her. Innately he reasoned that the only way he could safeguard his future happiness was to remove the girl he loved from Cupid's open market.

"Listen, Peggy, I've got no known relatives, and so far as any one knows I'm the first of my family, and I want to do what this article says every man like me should do," he told the girl, as he handed her the clipping he had cut out of his paper on that unforgotten night in New York.

Peggy read the article with wide-eyed interest, and all the while she blushed. To hide her embarrassment she essayed laughing tantalizingly.

"Well, I'll see what I can do towards finding you a good wife," she finally promised him teasingly.

They had just reached an inviting rustic bench in a vine-covered bower beside the hotel. The earnest young man promptly fell to his knees, and begged the girl to be his. Tears streamed down his clean-shaven face as he implored. This touched her heart, and she impulsively leaned over to plant a kiss of compassion on his forehead. Thereafter her manner was more encouraging. Her frivolous merriment succumbed to serious thoughtfulness. Here was a frank young man who earnestly aspired to

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amount to something worth while, and the girl knew that deep in her heart was a similar ambition for herself.

"Do you know I'm beginning to think you're the finest fellow in all the wide, wide world," Peggy whispered in Black's ear.

"No; I'm nothing like that, but I am to be if—"

"If I'll say yes—"

"Yes."

"And you've gone and said it for me?"

"Oh, *kid*, you've made me happy," gleefully exclaimed the man as he arose to his feet and embraced the girl of all girls to him.

"And somehow I feel immensely happy myself," she admitted. "Do you know, I think it's going to be great fun getting to be somebody and—and—I do want to see you become a successful actor——"

"No, Peggy, not yours truly," he interrupted. "I've got my head set on being a lawyer."

"Good! Then you'll be at a better kind of a bar for the rest of your life," Peggy replied enthusiastically. "Anyway, I can be the 'actor' member of the family."

"No, all you're going to be is my little wife and pal," he announced with gentle decisiveness.

"Well, I guess, come to think of it, that'll be enough," she agreed.

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Then followed a truly fond embrace and a veritable shower of kisses. 'Twas indeed the happiest night of "Kid" Black's turbulent life.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE very next night Bertha Grant in New York "played" the rejuvenated Midgie as her trump card in her game to upset the wedding plans of the man she loved—Philip J. Harrison, who "Kid" Black had saved from being robbed. Through her influence with certain prominent newspaper men, Bertha had caused to be printed an announcement concerning the arrival in New York of Princess Heloise, who had come to arrange finances which would enable her to gain the throne of a certain small island kingdom. Princess Heloise was described as being "ravishingly beautiful," and it was incidentally mentioned that she had remained free from matrimonial entanglements thus far. There was such an air of mystery surrounding Princess Heloise and her magnetic charms were dwelt upon at such great length that she created a sensation before she was presented to any one. She was so haughty and so exclusive that none of the many eligibles could even get an introduction.

Princess Heloise was, of course, none other than Midgie, transformed into a "lady" of dainty eccentricities. Adorned with rare jewels and fineries, she was domiciled in an elaborate suite of rooms in one of Gotham's most fashionable hotels. She really seemed quite regal with her retinue of elegantly arrayed servants.

On this night Princess Heloise had relegated all social

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ambitions for business and had arranged for Philip J. Harrison to call at her suite, ostensibly to formally appoint him as her counsel. Harrison was as entirely unwary as he was completely deceived, and he accepted her gracious invitation with marked avidity. In fact, he could not resist a longing to see this princess about whom he had read so much.

He attired himself with great care in his best evening clothes and soon afterwards presented himself at the royal suite in a state of expectant excitement. It was his first opportunity to meet a girl of royal blood, and he hoped for a romantic adventure, being for the nonce quite oblivious to the obligation of his betrothal. He was unaware of the fact that Bertha Grant, the girl he had jilted, was responsible for all this unusual event, and that she was hidden in the suite awaiting his arrival with more breathless anxiety than Midgie could possibly muster, in spite of her realization that she was pursuing a very exciting course for the sake of her benefactress.

Princess Heloise received Harrison with charming grace. She was highly trained for every move she made. Bertha had rehearsed her countless times.

Harrison was impressed at once by the cultured manner of his hostess, and his very first thought was that she was the most beautiful, most bewitching girl he had ever seen. He felt sure his fiancée would never know if he

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enjoyed a little celestial romance with a proud beauty who was soon to leave the country anyway.

How well did Bertha Grant *know* Philip Harrison! She was convinced from the beginning that she had lost the man of her heart because of his fickle disposition and his penchant for frivolity. Now she was bent on winning him back by preying on that same giddiness.

Princess Heloise was keyed to a high pitch for the experience, and after solemnly conferring with the young lawyer along business lines, she waxed delightfully vivacious, but not for one instant did she fail to be studiously lady-like. She led the vulnerable romancer through the various stages of mad infatuation with all the skill of the most proficient siren. Ere came the moment for his departure Harrison was so enamored of the girl that he actually experienced difficulty in restraining himself from declaring his love. She was elated with the success she was achieving as a charmer. It was the first time *Midgie* had ever undertaken the conquest of a high-class man's heart, and she immediately reasoned that her truly cyclonic success indicated this to be her forte.

When Harrison had left, after kissing the royal hand fervently and lingeringly, Bertha Grant leaped from her hiding-place and fairly swept Midgie off of her feet in her enthusiasm over her admirable conduct.

"Now you can see how easy it was for another

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woman to win him away from me, and how easy it is going to be for me to win him back through you," she told Midgie.

* * * * *

The very next evening Harrison, after much beseeching, persuaded Princess Heloise to permit him to call again, and within ten minutes after dashing into her smiling presence as if overjoyed, he proclaimed his love with all the eloquence he could summon, and within the earshot of the hiding Bertha he told this erstwhile woman of the street that he knew she was the purest flower that could be gained by any man!

"You are my very ideal, and I propose marriage," he said as a climax to his outpouring.

"But I am told you are engaged to another," the princess replied.

"Yes, it is true; but I shall break off that engagement at once," he declared, forcing *Midgie* into his embrace.

"That must be your first step before I can permit you to woo me," the princess ordered as she firmly removed her admirer's arm from around her waist.

"It shall be done tomorrow for the sake of true love," he assured her.

And when Harrison left that evening the thought uppermost in his mind was to lose no time in jilting a second woman, and thus remove the one barrier to his

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courtship of Princess Heloise.

The very next day Harrison formally broke off his engagement, receiving from his fiancée a broad-minded letter in which she declared she had no desire of tying him down to a matrimonial match which he was sure would not be happy. She accepted her fate as a matter of course, and she was not heart-broken. Harrison rushed to Midgie with this letter, and urged that she accept him at once.

"Oh, but you must at least grant me the pleasure of a few weeks of wooing," she laughed.

"Surely, I will grant your every request," he replied gallantly.

From this moment on, Harrison's manner was exceedingly ingratiating. He was handsome and he was cultured. Besides, he possessed a striking personality. He was quite too adept at the art of heroic love-making for the thoroughly inexperienced Midgie, and within a very brief period of time she lost the mere spirit of fun which had characterized her whole escapade up to then, and she suddenly became imbued with the idea that it would be a great triumph for her actually to capture Harrison and not shift him over to Bertha Grant, in accordance with the latter's well-laid plans. Herein trouble began to brew—divergent motives clashed, with Bertha unsuspecting and Midgie designing.

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While these complications were accumulating in New York, the erstwhile East Side thug, now much sought by the police, was winning the esteem of the townspeople of Excelsior Springs by his generosity, his clean living and the zealous support he extended to all civic and charitable projects. Indeed, "Kid" Black was really beginning to live up to his assumed name of Will B. White. He was "white" in all of his dealings with his fellows, and it was evident to all who met him that he was earnestly striving to better himself and make a record worthy of admiration. He was constantly busy, and he invariably whistled gaily as he kept at his tasks.

One of this young man's most commendable acts was to give a huge picnic for the poor children of the community at his own expense. He had long since betrayed a marked fondness for children, and the manifestation of this inclination proved eloquently that he aspired to found a family of his own. His whole conduct being above reproach, he was popular now, and Peggy Jules had duly discovered him to be her ideal. In fact, she was soon taking most of the initiative in advancing the cause of their romance, Black having temporarily let up in his suit, due to the further development of his conscience having brought him to the realization that he had committed a grave blunder in quitting New York in the manner in which he had selected so thoughtlessly. He was

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just a little apprehensive as to what might happen to him as a result of the bad muddle he had left back East, and he had mustered sufficient nobility to prefer remaining single rather than to get Peggy implicated if he was to be harrassed at any time by the law because of his past life. Intuition was at its work, because Black had no inkling of the true situation confronting him. Of course, he did not confide in the girl to the extent of telling her of all his worries. His one strong desire was to spare her any regret or sorrow. Naturally she could not understand his seeming loss of enthusiasm over her. Forsooth, she was quite worried about it. He was mysterious in his exhortations against bothering about anything. At times he seemed silently to beseech sympathy, and even pity.

"You act strange at times, dear," she told him. "What ails you?"

"Nothing worth worrying about, Peggy, and anyway, we're having a wonderful time, and are fast getting to be somebody, so let's stay as happy as we can, until fate takes its hand in the game," he told her, with an air of intensified mystery.

Black's attitude was certainly the result of true premonition, because a few days later City Marshal John Ford, in glancing over a recent copy of *The Detective*, a publication devoted to the apprehension of criminals, was amazed

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to find a picture of a man who closely resembled the popcorn and peanut vendor he knew as Will B. White. Printed with this picture was the following notice:

WANTED FOR MURDER

"Kid" Black, age 25 years, height 5 feet 10 inches, weight 165 pounds. Jet black hair, brown eyes and dark complexion. Has general appearance of a ruffian. Five hundred dollars reward for his capture.

Marshal Ford was so astonished over his discovery that he went straightway to Black's popcorn stand and, taking up a position nearby, compared the face of the vendor with that of the picture. Being unobserved in this, the officer kept his own counsel and wired the New York police secretly.

Four days later Robert Cross, a New York detective, arrived at Excelsior Springs, and promptly arrested Black, announcing with plenty of officious show that his prisoner was wanted for murder in the first degree. This startling event created a terrific sensation in the summer resort, where opinion was at once divided. Many of those who had come to know Black best felt sure there was some mistake—he had made such a favorable impression by his exemplary deportment that it was difficult to believe he had ever committed murder. There was the

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ever-present clique of skeptics, who "always knew" the fellow was a dangerous criminal. Thus was the whole town agog with gossip.

But there were two persons who promptly came out in the open, and staunchly declared their undying belief in "Kid" Black's innocence. These were Peggy Jules and her employer, Walter Frank. In a most heart-rending impromptu conference held at the town calaboose, Black swore to both that he was not guilty, and frankly told them the entire story of his participation in the foul plot in the presence of Detective Cross, who jotted down notes as the prisoner talked.

"I did enough dirty tricks in my mean life, but, thank God, I escaped the unpardonable crime of taking another's life," the overwhelmed Black asserted with forcefulness.

"I believe you, dear—every word you say, and I am going to stick by you at any cost," Peggy announced, as she smiled bravely in an effort to cheer up the man she loved more in adversity than she had ever dared to during the days of tranquillity.

Black waived all extradition rights, and went back to New York with Detective Cross, it being agreed that Frank would bring Peggy on in time for the trial. Black assumed the attitude of resignation to fate, and he was anxious to go through with his ordeal as quickly as possible, hoping against hope that some unseen force would

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arise in its might to save him. He was brave, though sad ; he was really heroic and stoical with it. He had the advantage of a clear conscience, and he acted as if he was confident all the world would some day know that he had conquered himself in time to avert the irrevocable tragedy of taking the life of another.

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CHAPTER VII.

NOT more than an hour before extra editions of the newspapers announced the capture of "Kid" Black to New Yorkers, Midgie, intoxicated by her wild, fallacious ambition to bask in the sunshine of luxury all the rest of her life, succeeded in eluding Bertha Grant long enough to "give in" to Phillip Harrison's pleadings for a quick, secret marriage. Yes, without a single conscientious scruple, this little vampire double-crossed the trusting Bertha, becoming Mrs. Philip J. Harrison in fact, and legally, even while her benefactress awaited her return in the hotel suite. The moment had arrived for Bertha to walk majestically onto the scene and win Harrison for her own. It had come to the final act in the clever little drama she was enacting, and up to the very last all indications pointed to complete success for her. She had sent Midgie out with the man she loved for the purpose of enticing him into imbibing sufficiently of wine to make him reckless and good-natured in order that his own frivolity might be exposed to him with more safety. But Midgie disobeyed orders.

Bertha was still impatiently awaiting the return of the couple when she heard the newsboys yelling "extra," and she summoned a servant to secure a copy of one of the papers for her. Naturally she was intensely interested in reading of the news pertaining to "Kid" Black's

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arrest. Midgie first heard of the news as she was returning with Harrison from the minister's home at which they had been quietly married. Consternation at once seized her. She feared she would be dragged into the case, and she did not want to be exposed to her husband, who was entirely unaware of her past bad life.

"My darling husband, I'm so anxious to get started on our honeymoon. Let's go at once," she urged impulsively.

"I shall be happy to accede to your wishes, my dear," he replied. "If it suits you, I will take you back to your hotel, and then go to my offices to wind up certain pending business affairs, and we will be free to go."

"No; you go on to your office and transact your business, and I will go to the hotel alone, and make my preparations—it will save time," she suggested eagerly.

This request rather surprised Harrison, but he bowed to his wife's will. He assisted her into a taxicab and then hurried to his offices. A half hour later Midgie arrived in her suite, and found Bertha in anything but an amiable mood.

"Goodness, you must have taken your time without considering me in the least," Bertha reproved.

"I couldn't help it," Midgie gasped. "I'm ill."

"Well, here is something which will add to your discomfort, I am sorry to say," Bertha said, handing her

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newspaper to the now faint girl.

Midgie scanned the headlines and, fortunately, her mind worked fast. Here was an opportunity to get away from Bertha, and she sought to take advantage of it before the latter could possibly demand a further explanation as to her failure to bring Harrison back to the hotel with her, but she failed in her calculation.

"Where is Mr. Harrison?"

"Well, you see," Midgie gulped, "this news reached me just as we were entering the cafe for a few drinks, and it upset me so completely that I had to beg him to excuse me."

"Oh, you little simpleton," Bertha expostulated.

"I—I—can't help it, Miss Grant, I've got to get out of the reach of the police quick," Midgie protested.

Bertha was gullible enough to concede in her own mind that Midgie was actuated by motives of self-protection in this, and she suddenly became slightly alarmed lest she might be dragged into the case, too, as a possible result of being caught in the company of the woman who was known as Black's companion. Consequently she hastened to her own apartment, after making an appointment to meet Midgie later. Then the latter hurriedly packed a few of her belongings preparatory to a flight with Phillip J. Harrison.

Meanwhile the first thing to command Harrison's

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attention when he arrived at his offices was the following telegram:

Philip J. Harrison, New York, N. Y.

Want you to defend me in my trial for murder. I'm an innocent man and my case should be easily won. Will pay you any price you set. I'm young man who saved you from hold-up that night on Fifth avenue, and to whom you loaned fifty next day. See me at the Tombs when I arrive.

"Kid" Black.

Harrison was visibly impressed by this telegram. A sense of duty told him that he must stay and hear the man's story. He was pondering over this when he was called on the telephone by Bertha Grant, who had decided to complete her work without the further aid of Midgie.

"I have just learned of your engagement being broken, and I want to ask you to do me the honor of visiting me and hearing what I have to say about the misunderstanding which has caused me so much anguish," Bertha said.

"I am sorry, but that is impossible, because I have just married the famous Princess Heloise," announced Harrison, suddenly inspired with the idea of convincing Bertha once for all that he did not love her.

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"What!" she fairly screamed into the phone, causing the man to jump in astonishment. "Why, she's a bogus princess, my maid, a former woman of the tenderloin, and the mistress of 'Kid' Black, the gunman who is about to be tried for murder."

This broadside was hurled at Harrison in such convincing tones that he did not even wait for more. Instead he banged the receiver on the hook and rushed post-haste to Midgie's apartment, confronting her excitedly and demanding a denial of the whole accusation. Midgie was just floundering around in her great confusion for an answer when Bertha Grant ran into the room, a raging maniac in her uncontrollable anger. The abruptness with which she had been made to realize Midgie's duplicity completely upset her reason for the time being, since that duplicity meant her being deprived of the one thing for which she lived—wedlock to the man she loved.

The moment Midgie espied Bertha she knew the time had come to fight, and she did, like a cornered tigress. At this she was adept and dangerous. Her sense of justice was entirely undeveloped. She knew not the meaning of fair play. Thus it came to pass that she armed herself with a chair and attacked Bertha before an altercation could possibly be started by any one. Phillip Harrison was in the vortex of a storm which he knew not how to combat. He realized he could not stand by and see murder

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committed, and yet he dreaded to become involved in a rough-and-tumble fight with a woman—his legal wife.

“Save me from this terrible woman,” Bertha screamed hysterically at the top of her voice.

The commotion started by Bertha alarmed Harrison more than the belligerency of Midgie. He did not want the outside world attracted, but he was sadly confused. Events had crowded themselves upon him with such rapidity that he was anything but cool.

“Ladies!” he finally managed to exclaim, in-time to stay the advancing Midgie momentarily. “Don’t force me to regard you as mere women.” Then he confronted Midgie with his open hands held out as if to surrender. “If you must hurt any one, let me be the victim,” he told her.

“I don’t want to hurt nobody, but I’m not going to let her or any other dame hurt me either,” Midgie declared.

“Any other *dame*!” Harrison repeated after her in surprise. “Are these the proper words for a princess!”

“Princess me eye,” expostulated Midgie. “I’m no princess, and I’d a-never pretended to be if it hadn’t been for that woman’s determination to marry you.”

“And *you*—*you* took unfair advantage of an opportunity to cheat us both?” demanded Harrison.

“Yes, who wouldn’t?” the defiant little woman hurled

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back at the man.

Thereupon Harrison denounced her bitterly.

"For perpetrating such a monumental deception you should spend the rest of your days in prison," he yelled.

"Oh, I should worry," was her reply, as she placed the chair on the floor, but retained her grasp on it.

At this juncture of the unusual proceedings Bertha Grant broke down and wept. She was obviously heart-broken. Her sobs interrupted Harrison in his excoriation of Midgie. He contemplated his former fiancée with deliberation, and then, with his gaze fixed on the trembling form he had often embraced, he walked leisurely to her. After hesitating a moment he placed his hand gently on her shoulder. This act on his part brought Midgie out of a near-stupor like a flash. A terrible jealousy swept over her whole being like wildfire, and she ran across the room like a wildcat. Harrison met her assault promptly and hurled her aside disdainfully. She retaliated just as promptly by summoning several male servants.

"Throw them both out of the place," she ordered

When the servants obeyed a lively scuffle ensued as a result of Harrison's inclination to resist such ignominious ejection, but it soon dawned upon him that his chances of overcoming all the odds were slight, and he voluntarily walked out of the room, leading Bertha by the

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hand. Midgie laughed jeeringly at the couple all the while. Her disconcerting laugh followed them all the way down the long hallway.

Once alone Midgie settled down to laying plans for turning her defeat into a financial victory, for she was wise enough to realize that Harrison could be compelled to pay her a pretty penny to get rid of her, since she had legal grounds on which to stand.

Meanwhile Harrison, now crestfallen, took Bertha to her apartment, begged forgiveness, and was forgiven.

"I have been a miserable, contemptible fool ever since I rejected the wonderful love you were always ready to give me, and now I am ready to make amends," he told her.

"And I am just as ready as ever to make any sacrifice for you, dear," she whispered back anxiously.

"Then the first sacrifice I shall ask you to make is to become my wife, and—I pray I can avoid making you sacrifice further after the day I hope to make the happiest in your life," he replied earnestly.

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CHAPTER VIII

WHEN "Kid" Black was assigned to his cell in the Tombs the first thing he did was to send for Harrison, who was now reluctant to respond. The tangle he had gotten into obviously nullified the wisdom of participating in the defense of the reputed "lover" of "the woman of the world," who had inveigled him into marriage with her. Forsooth, it is doubtful whether or not Harrison would have gone to see Black at all had he not received the following second appeal:

Dear Mr. Harrison:

I've heard about your trouble. Don't worry, old pal. I've got enough influence over Midgie to get a square deal for you. I'm going to help you whether you help me or not, because I owe you fifty dollars, and I won't forget past favors.

"Kid" Black.

From the hour of his first visit to Black's cell, Harrison was finally convinced that his client was innocent and deserved his best efforts. Moreover, he had ample cause to feel sure that Black was sincere in his intentions of using his influence over Midgie to curtail her sensational grafting activities as a result of holding the bludgeon of a marriage certificate over the lawyer's head. So it followed that Harrison became Black's attorney with

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a feeling strongly akin to brotherhood.

The day before the trial Peggy Jules and Walter Frank arrived in New York and were escorted to Black's cell just in time to see Midgie leave it. Black had summoned Midgie to further use his influence over her in Harrison's behalf by telling her the lawyer would drop his case cold and let him be sent to the electric chair if he failed to induce her to make a satisfactory financial settlement and permitted him to get a divorce quietly. Midgie's old love for Black had returned, and she at last promised to make a sacrifice for his sake, as she believed, when, as a matter of fact, it was more to his harm. He realized the chance he was taking, and he knew full well in his own mind that the one girl for him was Peggy Jules, who now betrayed a marked jealousy and a feeling closely resembling chagrin as a consequence of what she had seen with her own eyes.

"Who was *that* girl?" she demanded, almost irritably.

"I'll be perfectly honest with you, Peggy," he replied, looking her squarely in the eyes. "That is an old friend of mine, who recently married my lawyer by deceiving him, and I'm trying to use my influence over her for his sake. I guess she will expect me to ask her to marry me if I ever get out of this trouble, but I shall have to disappoint her, because I am going to ask *you* to be my wife."

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Black was so straightforward in this that Peggy's confidence in him was decidedly increased, and the mutual love between the two never had run more riot. Even the sombre setting of the lonely cell failed to check the romance. Walter Frank was highly pleased by the trend affairs took after the threatened storm, and he assumed the responsibility of buoying up the hopes of both.

"Now, kids, don't go to frettin', 'cause this whole thing is going to come out all right, and we're all going back to Excelsior Springs," he said.

"And settle down," Peggy ventured, catching the spirit of optimism quickly.

"Yes," he added, "and live happy ever after, just like you've done in so many of my plays."

* * * * *

The first day of the trial Black found himself confronted in court by Max Marx and "Baldy" Ruff and numerous other gangmen with whom he was affiliated in his old days on the East Side. The testimony of this first day and the second day was all against him, and the State seemed to have a comparatively clear case, from which there was no escape for him. All the circumstantial evidence and his well-known criminal record of the past counted strongly in favor of his prosecution.

On the third day Lawyer Harrison sprang a sensa-

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tion by offering an alibi, based upon the sworn testimony of Bertha Grant, an ideal witness of unimpeachable veracity. She told the Court of her meeting with Black in Central Park on that unforgotten night, and all the effort of the State to shake her from her unequivocal declaration that she *knew* she was conversing with the man at the very time the murder was committed some distance away proved unsuccessful. She told of seeing the defendant toss his revolver into the pond, after deciding against suicide, and later in an impassioned address Harrison contended the truth, namely, that Black had yielded to the command of a newly-awakened conscience at the crucial moment in his life. This most plausible theory made a profound impression upon the jury, and when Harrison abruptly rested his case on the alibi evidence, the State's attorneys were taken entirely unawares.

Two hours later "Kid" Black was acquitted, and in the scenes of rejoicing, of which he was the centre, there were two serious clashes between women. The first occurred when Midgie sought to interfere with Peggy Jules, who, out of sheer joy, kissed Black. Before there was time to clear this up Bertha Grant clashed with Midgie in making her way to Black for the purpose of congratulating him. She had seen Midgie's belligerent move towards Peggy, and she determined to prevent the upsetting of another dream of romance.

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"You disreputable little ingrate, don't you dare presume the right to estrange this couple, too," Bertha yelled at Midgie as she confronted her. "You humiliated me without mercy, and now I expose you without mercy. It's an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."

"Go on and start something and see where I knock you to," Midgie yelled back, assuming a dangerously antagonistic attitude, but at this point court officers took a hand and hustled Midgie out of the room.

Previously Black had delivered to Harrison an agreement of annulment of marriage, duly signed by Midgie, who, in turn, had received \$1000 in cash.

"The agreement is part payment of the fee I owe you," Black said.

"It's payment in full, my friend; you do not owe me a cent," was the grateful Harrison's reply.

Later the lawyer went his way with Bertha Grant, while Midgie returned to her old haunts and celebrated by going on a big spree. She was the result of taking the wrong advantage of ambition.

"Kid" Black celebrated his legal victory by wedding Peggy Jules the day following the acquittal. Walter Frank was the witness at the ceremony, and he gave a big dinner in honor of the happy couple. At this dinner the question of a name came up for serious discussion.

"Now that you've proved that you are what your

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name says you would be, Will B. White, why don't you change it again and start all over?" Frank suggested.

"Yes, since you are the first and only one of your family, so far as any one knows, you are at liberty to adopt any name you choose, dear," Peggy put in.

"You know," continued Frank, "I like your right name, Peggy."

"Have you got another name?" Black asked in some surprise.

"Yes; Jules is only my stage name—I am really Peggy Fanning."

"Fanning! By Jove, I like that name. Let me see, now that we are married we will start a new clan. Why shouldn't I become Fanning Newclan?"

"Fine!" the girl exclaimed. "Mr. and Mrs. Fanning Newclan—that sounds promising."

"Great! It's absolutely great! Congratulations to the Newclans," Frank exclaimed jovially.

At the end of the first year thereafter there was a new baby in the Newclan home at Excelsior Springs, and the new clan was formally started with a lusty zest. By going into co-partnership with Walter Frank, Newclan had been able to launch himself into the printing and

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newspaper business, and he was prospering. He was also fast becoming an influential citizen.

Thus triumphed the erstwhile thug, all and only because Conscience had joined hands with Ambition at the psychological moment.

THE END.



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